



THE
PRAIRIE-BIRD.

BY THE HON.

CHARLES AUGUSTUS MURRAY.

AUTHOR OF

"TRAVELS IN NORTH AMERICA."

<i>Ferdinand.</i>	Most sure the Goddess
On whom these airs attend—	My prime request
Which I do last pronounce is, O you wonder,	
If you be maid or no?	No wonder, Sir,
<i>Miranda.</i>	
But certainly a maid.	My language, Heavens!
<i>Ferdinand.</i>	<i>Tempest, Act i.</i>

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PRAIRIE-BIRD.

CHAPTER I.

REGINALD AND HIS PARTY AT THE INDIAN ENCAMPMENT.

WHILE Reginald and his two companions were feasting with Tamenund, a similar repast was laid before the rest of the party, in the lodge of a brave named Maque-o-nah, or the "Bear-asleep," at which Mike Smith occupied the centre, or principal seat, and next to him sat Monsieur Perrot—the latter personage being very curious to see the culinary arrangements made for this, his first Indian banquet. He was horrified at observing the carelessness with which they thrust half the side of a buffalo to the edge of a huge fire of undried wood, leaving a portion of the meat to be singed and burnt, while other parts were scarcely exposed to the heat; he could not refrain from expressing to one of the Canadian *coueurs des Bois*,

in his own language, his contempt and pity for the ignorant savages, who thus presumed to desecrate a noble science, which ranked higher, in his estimation, than poetry, painting, or sculpture; but he was warned that he must be very careful neither to reject, nor show any distaste for the food set before him, as, by so doing, he would give mortal offence to his entertainers. It was ludicrous in the extreme to watch the poor Frenchman's attempts at imparting to his features a smile of satisfaction, when a wooden bowl was placed before him, filled with half boiled maize, and beside it one of the buffalo ribs, evidently least favoured by the fire, as it was scarcely warmed through, and was tough and stringy as shoe-leather. After bestowing upon sundry portions of it many fruitless attempts at mastication, he contrived, unperceived, to slip what remained of the meat into the pocket of his jacket, and then laughed with great self-satisfaction at the trick he had played his uncivilized hosts.

When the feast was concluded in Tamenund's lodge, Reginald desired his men to unpack one of the bales, which he pointed out, and to spread its contents before him; the savages gathered round the coveted and glittering objects, with eager but silent astonishment, while he separated the presents which, by the advice of Baptiste, were now distributed among their chiefs: to Tamenund he apportioned a large blanket of scarlet cloth, a silver

mounted pistol, and a basket containing mirrors, beads, and trinkets, for his wives and daughters. To Mahéga a bridle ornamented with beads, several pounds of tobacco, powder, and lead, a fowling-piece, and a blanket of blue woollen-stuff. The features of the Osage Chief relaxed into a grim smile of satisfaction as he received these valuable gifts, and he so far overcame the repulsive sternness of his usual character as to seize Reginald's hand, and to tell him that he was a great chief, and good to his Indian brothers. The other presents having been distributed among the chiefs and braves, according to their rank, the feast was broken up and they retired to their respective lodges; Reginald, Baptiste, and M. Perrot, being accommodated in that of Tamenund's himself, and Bearskin, with the rest of the white-men's party, in those lodges which have before been mentioned as being contiguous to that of the old chief.

During the first night that he spent in his new quarters, the excitement, and novelty of the scene, banished sleep from the eyes of Reginald, and finding himself restless, he arose half an hour before daybreak, to enjoy the early freshness of the morning. Throwing his rifle over his arm, he was about to leave the lodge, when Baptiste touched him, and inquired in a low voice, if he were prepared with a reply in case of being challenged by any of the scouts around the encamp-

ment ; with some shame he confessed he had forgotten it, and the guide then instructed him if he were challenged, to say "*Lenape n'a ki Netis,*" or "I am Netis, the friend of the Delawarees." Being thus prepared, and carrying with him the few articles requisite for a Prairie toilet, he stepped out into the open air. Close by the entrance of the lodge he saw a tall figure stretched on the grass, enveloped in a buffalo-robe, the hairy fell of which was silvered with the heavy night-dew ; it was War-Eagle, who rarely slept in lodge or tent, and whose quick eye, though he neither moved nor spoke, discerned his white brother in a moment, although the latter could not recognize his friend.

Reginald pursued his way through the encampment to its extremity, where the streamlet before mentioned wound its course among the dells and hillocks of the Prairie, until it reached the larger river that flowed through the distant forest. After following the banks of the stream for one or two miles, the red streaks in the eastern horizon gave notice of day's approach, and observing near him a hill, somewhat more elevated than those by which it was surrounded, Reginald climbed to its top, in order to witness the effect of sunrise on that wild and picturesque scene.

To the westward, the undulations of the Prairie, wrapped in heavy folds of mist, rose in confused heaps like the waves of a boundless ocean : to the

south, he could just distinguish the lodges and the smouldering fires of the encampment, whence, at intervals, there fell upon his ear mingled and indistinct sounds, disagreeable perhaps in themselves, but rendered harmonious by distance, and by their unison with the wildness of the surrounding objects; while to the eastward lay a dense and gloomy range of woods, over the summits of whose foliage the dawning sun was shedding a stream of golden light.

Reginald gazed upon the scene with wonder and delight; and every moment while he gazed called into existence richer and more varied beauties. The mists and exhalations rising from the plain curled themselves into a thousand fantastic shapes around the points and projections of the hills, where they seemed to hang like mantles which the Earth had cast from her bosom, as being rendered unnecessary by the appearance of the day; swarms of children and of dusky figures began to emerge from the encampment, and troops of horses to crop the pasture on the distant hills, while the splendour of the sun, now risen in its full glory, lit up with a thousand varying hues the eastern expanse of boundless forest. Reginald's heart was not insensible to the impressions naturally excited by such a scene; and while he admired its variegated beauties, his thoughts were raised in adoration to that Almighty and bene-

ficient Being, whose temple is the Earth, and whose are the "cattle upon a thousand hills."

Having made his way again to the banks of the stream, and found a spot sheltered by alder and poplar trees, he bathed and made his morning toilet; after which he returned towards the encampment, his body refreshed by his bathe, and his mind attuned to high and inspiring thoughts by the meditation in which he had been engaged. As he strolled leisurely along, he observed a spot where the trees were larger, and the shade apparently more dense than the other portions of the valley; and, being anxious to make himself acquainted with all the localities in the neighbourhood of his new home, he followed a small beaten path, which, after sundry windings among the alders, brought him to an open space screened on three sides by the bushes, and bounded on the fourth by the stream. Reginald cast his eyes around this pleasant and secluded spot, until they rested upon an object that rivetted them irresistibly. It was a female figure seated at the root of an ancient poplar, over a low branch of which one arm was carelessly thrown, while with the other she held a book, which she was reading with such fixed attention as to be altogether unconscious of Reginald's approach. Her complexion was dark, but clear and delicate, and the rich brown hair which fell over her neck and shoulders, still damp

and glossy from her morning ablutions, was parted on her forehead by a wreath of wild flowers twined from amongst those which grew around the spot ; the contour of her figure, and her unstudied attitude of repose, realized the classic dreams of Nymph and Nereid, while her countenance wore an expression of angelic loveliness, such as Reginald had never seen or imagined.

He gazed—and gazing on those sweet features, he saw the red full lips move unconsciously, while they followed the subject that absorbed her attention, and forgetful that he was intruding on retirement, he waited, entranced, until those down-cast eyes should be raised. At length she looked up, and seeing the figure of a man within a few paces of her, she sprang to her feet with the lightness of a startled antelope, and darting on him a look of mingled surprise and reproof, suppressed the exclamation of alarm that rose to her lips. Reginald would fain have addressed the lovely being before him, he would fain have excused his unintended intrusion ; but the words died upon his lips, and it was almost mechanically that he doffed his hunting cap, and stood silent and uncovered before her ! Recovering from the momentary confusion, she advanced a step towards him, and with an ingenuous blush held out her hand. saying in a gentle tone of inquiry, and with the purest accent, “ Netis, my brother’s friend ? ”

"The same, fair creature," replied Reginald, whose wonder and admiration were still more excited by the untaught grace and dignity of her manner, as well as by hearing his own tongue so sweetly pronounced; "but, in the name of Heaven, who—what—whence can you be?" Blushing more deeply at the animation and eagerness of his manner, she was for a moment silent, when he continued, striking his hand on his forehead:—"Oh, I have it, fool, tortoise, that I was. You are 'Prairie-bird,' the sister of whom Wingenund has told me so much." Then, gently pressing the little hand which he had taken, he added, "Dear Wingenund! he saved my life; his sister will not consider me a stranger?"

Again a warmer blush mantled on the cheek of Prairie-bird, as she replied, "You are no stranger: you speak of Wingenund's good deed: you are silent about your own! You drew War-Eagle from the deep and swift waters. I have heard it all, and have often wished to see you and thank you myself." There was a modest simplicity in her manner as she uttered these few words that confirmed the impression made on Reginald by the first glimpse of her lovely form and features; but beyond this there was something in the tone of her voice that found its way direct to his heart; it fell upon his ear like an old familiar strain of music, and he felt unwilling to break the silence that followed its closing accents.

It is not our province, in a simple narrative of this kind, to discuss the oft-disputed question, whether love at first sight deserves the name of love; whether it is merely a passing emotion, which, though apparently strong, a brief lapse of time may efface; or, whether there be really secret irresistible natural impulses, by which two human beings, who meet together for the first time, feel as if they had known and loved each other for years, and as if the early cherished visions of fancy, the aspirations of hope, the creations of imagination, the secret, undefined longings of the heart, were all at once embodied and realized.* We are inclined to believe that, although not frequent, instances sometimes occur of this instinctive sympathy and attraction, and that, when they do so, the tree of affection, (like the fabled palm at the touch of the Genius' wand,) starts into immediate luxuriance of flower and foliage, striking its tenacious roots far into the kindly soil, destined thenceforward to become the nurture of its verdant youth, the support of its mature strength, and at length the resting-place of its leafless and time-stricken decay.

Such seemed to be the case with Reginald and Prairie-bird, for as they looked one at the other, each was unconsciously occupied with teeming thoughts that neither could define nor express,

* See Schiller's "Bride of Messina."

and both felt relieved at hearing approaching footsteps and the voice of the Black Father, who called out in English,

“Come, my child, I have allowed you full time this morning; we will return to the camp.” As he spoke his eye fell upon Reginald, and he added, courteously, “You have been early abroad, young sir.”

“I have,” replied Reginald. “I went to the top of yonder heights to see the sunrise, and was amply repaid by the beauty of the scene; on my return, I wandered accidentally into this secluded spot, and trust that my intrusion has been forgiven.”

“I believe that my dear child and pupil would forgive a greater offence than that, in one who has shown so much kindness to her brothers,” replied the Missionary, smiling; and he added, in a low voice, addressing the Prairie-bird in his own language, “Indeed, my child, I think he deserves our friendly welcome; for, unless his countenance strongly belies his character, it expresses all those good qualities which Wingenund taught us to expect.”

“Stay, sir,” said Reginald, colouring highly; “let me not participate, without your knowledge, in your communications to Prairie-bird. I have travelled much in Germany, and the language is familiar to me.”

"Then, my young friend," said Paul Müller, taking his hand kindly, "you have only learnt from what I said, how hard a task you will have to fulfil the expectations that Wingenund has led us to entertain."

"I can promise nothing," replied Reginald, glancing towards the maiden, "but a true tongue, a ready hand, and an honest heart; if these can serve my friend's sister, methinks she may expect them without being disappointed."

The words in themselves were nothing remarkable, but there was an earnest feeling in the tone in which they were spoken that made Prairie-bird's heart beat quicker; she answered him by a look, but said nothing. Wonderful is the expression, the magic eloquence of the human eye, and yet how is its power tenfold increased when the rays of its glance pass through the atmosphere even of dawning love. Reginald longed to know whence and who she could be, this child of the wilderness, who had so suddenly, so irresistibly, engaged his feelings; above all he longed to learn whether her heart and affections were free, and that single look, translated by the sanguine self-partiality of love, made him internally exclaim, "Her heart is not another's!" Whether his conjecture proved correct the after course of this tale will show, meanwhile we cannot forbear our admiration at the marvellous rapidity with which our

hero, at his first interview with Prairie-bird, settled this point to his own satisfaction. The little party now strolled towards the camp, and as they went, Reginald, seeing that Prairie-bird still held in her hand the book that he had seen her peruse with so much attention, said,

"May I inquire the subject of your studies this morning?"

"Certainly," she replied, with grave and sweet simplicity; "it is the subject of my study every morning; the book was given me by my dear father and instructor now by my side. I have much to thank him for; all I know, all I enjoy, almost all I feel, but most of all for this book, which he has taught me to love, and in some degree to understand."

As she spoke she placed in Reginald's hand a small copy of Luther's translation of the Bible; in the fly-leaf before the title page was written, "Given to Prairie-bird by her loving father and instructor, Paul Müller." Reginald read this inscription half aloud, repeating to himself the words "Müller," "father," and coupling them with the strange enigmas formerly uttered by Wingenund respecting the origin of Prairie-bird, he was lost in conjecture as to their meaning.

"I see your difficulty," said the Missionary; "you do not understand how she can call Wingenund and War-Eagle brothers, and me father.

In truth, she has from her earliest childhood been brought up by Tamenund as his daughter, and as I reside chiefly with this Delaware band, I have made it my constant occupation and pleasure to give her such instruction as my humble means admit ; she has been entrusted to us by the mysterious decrees of Providence ; and though the blood of neither flows in her veins, Tamenund and I have, according to our respective offices, used our best endeavours to supply the place of natural parents."

" Dear, dear father," said Prairie-bird, pressing his hand to her lips, and looking up in his face with tearful eyes, " you are and have been everything to me, instructor, comforter, guide, and father ! My Indian father, too, and my brothers are all kind and loving to me. I have read in the books that you have lent me many tales and histories of unkindness and hatred between parents and children, among nations enlightened and civilized. I have had every wish gratified before expressed, and every comfort provided. What could a father do for a child, that you have not done for me ?"

As she spoke she looked up in the Missionary's face with a countenance so beaming with full affection, that the old man pressed her in his arms, and kissing her forehead, muttered over her a blessing that he was too much moved to pronounce aloud ; after a pause of a few minutes, he

said to Reginald, with his usual benevolent smile, "We only know you yet by your Indian name of 'Netis'—how are you called in the States? We inquired of War-eagle and Wingenund, but they either did not remember, or could not pronounce your name?"

"Reginald Brandon," replied our hero.

Prairie-bird started, and abruptly said, "Again, again; say it once more?"

Reginald repeated it, and she pronounced the first name slowly after him, pressing her hand upon her forehead, and with her eye fixed on vacancy, while broken exclamations came from his lips.

"What are you thinking of, dear child?" said the Missionary, somewhat surprised and alarmed by her manner.

"Nothing, dear Father," she replied, with a faint smile; "it was a dream, a strange dream which that name recalled and confused my head; we are now close to the camp, I will go in and rest awhile; perhaps you may like to talk more with Ne—I mean," she added hesitating, "with Reginald." So saying, and saluting them with that natural grace which belonged to all her movements, she withdrew towards the camp, and Reginald's eyes followed her retreating figure until it was lost behind the canvass-folds that protected the opening to her tent.

CHAPTER II.

REGINALD HOLDS A CONVERSATION WITH THE MISSIONARY.

REGINALD still kept his eyes on the opening through which Prairie-bird had disappeared into the tent, as though they could have pierced through the canvass that concealed from his view its lovely inhabitant: his feelings were in a state of confusion and excitement, altogether new to him; for if, in his European travels, he had paid a passing tribute of admiration to the beauties who had crossed his path, and whom his remarkable personal advantages had rendered by no means insensible to his homage, the surface only of his heart had been touched, whereas now its deepest fountains were stirred, and the troubled waters gushed forth with overwhelming force.

He was recalled to himself by the voice of the Missionary, who, without appearing to notice his abstraction, said, "My son, if you choose that we should prolong our walk, I am ready to accompany you." If the truth must be told, Reginald could at that moment scarcely endure the presence

of any human being : he felt an impulse to rush into the woods, or over the plain, and to pour forth in solitude the torrent of feelings by which he was oppressed ; but he controlled himself, not only because he really felt a respect for the good Missionary, but also because he hoped through him to obtain some information respecting the extraordinary being who had taken such sudden possession of his thoughts ; he replied, therefore, that he would willingly accompany him, and they took their way together along the banks of the streamlet, alternately observing on the scenery and surrounding objects.

This desultory conversation did not long suit the eager and straightforward character of Reginald Brandon ; and he changed it by abruptly inquiring of his companion, whether he knew anything of the history and parentage of Prairie-bird.

“ Not much,” replied Paul Müller, smiling ; “ she was with this band of Delawares when I first came to reside among them ; if any one knows her history it must be Tamenund ; but he keeps it a profound secret, and gives out among the tribe that she was sent to him by the Great Spirit, and that as long as she remains with the band they will be successful in hunting and in war.”

“ But how,” inquired Reginald, “ can he make

such a tale pass current among a people who are well known to consider the female sex in so inferior and degraded a light ?”

“He has effected it,” replied the Missionary, “partly by accident, partly by her extraordinary beauty and endowments, and partly, I must own, by my assistance, which I have given because I thereby ensured to her the kindest and most respectful treatment, and also endeavoured, under God’s blessing, to make her instrumental in sowing the seed of His truth among these benighted savages.”

“Let me understand this more in detail,” said Reginald, “if the narration does not trouble you.”

“Her first appearance among the Delawares, as they have told me,” said the Missionary, was as follows : — “Their prophet, or Great Medicine Man, dreamt that under a certain tree was deposited a treasure that should enrich the tribe and render them fortunate : a party was sent by order of the chief to search the spot indicated, and on their arrival they found a female child wrapped in a covering of beaver skin, and reposing on a couch of Turkey feathers ; these creatures being supposed to preside peculiarly over the fate of the Delawares, they brought back the child with great ceremony to the village, where they placed her under the care of the chief ; set apart a tent or

lodge for her own peculiar use, and ever since that time have continued to take every care of her comfort and safety."

"I suppose," interrupted Reginald, "the dream of the Great Medicine, and all its accompaniments, were secretly arranged between him and the chief?"

"Probably they were," replied Paul; "but you must beware how you say as much to any Delaware; if you did not risk your life, you would give mortal offence. After all, an imposition that has resulted in harm to no one, and in so much good to an interesting and unprotected creature, may be forgiven."

"Indeed I will not gainsay it," replied our hero; "pray continue your narrative."

"My sacred office, and the kindly feeling entertained towards me by these Indians, gave me frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with Olitipa, or the 'Prairie-bird;' and I found in her such an amiable disposition, and so quick an apprehension, that I gave my best attention to the cultivation of talents, which might, I hoped, some day produce a harvest of usefulness. In reading, writing, and in music, she needed but little instruction; I furnished her from time to time with books, and paper, and pencils; an old Spanish guitar, probably taken from some of the dwellings of that people in Missouri, enabled her to practise

simple melodies, and you would be surprised at the sweetness with which she now sings words, strung together by herself in English and German, and also in the Delaware tongue, adapting them to wild airs, either such as she hears among the Indians, or invents herself; I took especial pains to instruct her in the practical elements of a science that my long residence among the different tribes has rendered necessary and familiar to me,— I mean that of medicine, as connected with the rude botany of the woods and prairies; and so well has she profited by my instruction, and by her own persevering researches, that there is scarcely a tree, or gum, or herb possessing any sanatory properties which she does not know and apply to the relief of those around her.

“Indeed,” said Reginald, laughing; “I had not expected to find this last among the accomplishments of Prairie-bird.”

“You were mistaken then,” replied Paul Müller; “nay, more, I fear that, in your estimate of what are usually termed female accomplishments, you have been accustomed to lay too much stress on those which are light or trifling, and too little on those which are useful and properly feminine; even in settled and civilized countries the most grievous fevers and ailments to which we are subject, require the ministration of a female nurse; can it be then unreasonable that we should en-

deavour to mingle, in their education, some knowledge of the remedies which they may be called upon to administer, and of the bodily ills which it is to be their province to alleviate?"

"You are right," answered Reginald, modestly; "and I entreat your pardon, for the hasty levity with which I spoke on the subject. I am well aware that, in olden times, no young woman's education was held to be complete without some knowledge both of the culinary and healing arts; and I much doubt whether society has not suffered from their having altogether abandoned the cultivation of these in favour of singing, dancing, and reading of the lightest kind."

"It is the character of the artificial state to which society is fast verging," replied Paul; "to prefer accomplishments to qualities, ornament to usefulness, luxury to comfort, tinsel to gold; setting aside the consideration of a future state, this system might be well enough, if the drawing-room, the theatre, and the ball, were the sum of human life; but it is ill calculated to render man dignified in his character, and useful to his fellow-creatures, or woman what she ought to be,—the comfort, the solace, the ornament of home."

"These observations may be true as regards England or France," replied Reginald: "but you surely would not apply them to our country?"

"To a certain extent, I do," answered the

Missionary. "I have been now thirty years on this continent, and have observed that, as colonists, the Americans have been very faithful imitators of these defects in their mother country; I am not sure that they will be rendered less so by their political emancipation."

The conversation was now straying rather too far from the subject to which Reginald desired to confine it; waving, therefore, all reply to the Missionary's last observation, he said, "If I understood you aright, there were, beyond these studies and accomplishments of Prairie-bird, some other means employed by you, to give and preserve to her the extraordinary influence which you say that she possesses over the Indians."

"There were," replied Paul Müller: "amongst others, I enabled her to vaccinate most of the children in this band, by which means they escaped the fatal effects of a disorder, that has committed dreadful ravages among the surrounding tribes; and I have instructed her in some of the elementary calculations of astronomy; owing to which they look upon her as a superior being, commissioned by the Great Spirit to live among them, and to do them good; thus her person is safe, and her tent as sacred from intrusion as the Great Medicine Lodge; I am allowed to occupy a compartment in it, where I keep our little stores of books and medicines, and she goes about the

camp on her errands of benevolence, followed by the attachment and veneration of all classes and ages ! ”

“Happy existence!” exclaimed Reginald ; “and yet,” added he, musing ; “she cannot, surely, be doomed through life to waste such sweetness on an air so desert !”

“I know not,” answered the Missionary. “God’s purposes are mysterious, and the instruments that he chooses for effecting them, various as the flowers on the prairie. Many an Indian warrior has that sweet child turned from the path of blood, more than one uplifted tomahawk has fallen harmless at the voice of her entreaty ; nay, I have reason to hope that in Wingenund, and in several others of the tribe, she has partially uprooted the weeds of hatred and revenge, and sown, in their stead, the seeds of Gospel truth. Surely, Reginald Brandon, you would not call such an existence wasted ?”

“That would I not, indeed,” replied the young man, with emphasis ; “it is an angel’s office !” he added, inaudibly, “and it is performed by an angel !”

Although he could have talked, or listened, on the subject of the Prairie-bird for hours together, Reginald began already to feel that sensitive reserve respecting the mention of her name to another which always accompanies even the earliest dawns of

love ; and he turned the conversation by inquiring of the venerable Missionary, whether he would kindly communicate something of his own history ; and explain how he had come from so remote a distance to pass the evening of life among the Indians.

“ The tale is very brief, and the motives very simple. I was born in Germany, and having early embraced the tenets of the United Brethren, of whom you have probably heard in that country under the name of ‘Herrn-hüter,’ I received a pressing invitation from Heckewalder, then in England, to join him in his projected Missionary journey to North America. I gladly accepted the offer, and after a short stay in London, embarked with that learned and amiable man,—who soon became what he now is, the nearest and dearest friend I have on earth,—and I placed myself under his guidance in the prosecution of the grand objects of our undertaking, which were these :—to endeavour to convert the Indian nations to Christianity, not as the Spaniards had pretended to attempt, by fire, and sword, and violence, but by going unarmed and peaceably among them, studying their languages, characters, and history ; and while showing in our own persons an example of piety and self-denial, to eradicate patiently the more noxious plants from their moral constitution, and to mould such as were good and wholesome to the

purposes of religious truth. God be praised, our labours have not been altogether without effect ; but I blush for my white brethren when I confess that the greatest obstacle to our success has been found in the vices, the open profligacy, the violence, and the cruelty of those who have called themselves Christians. Heckewalder has confined his exertions chiefly to the Indians remaining in Pennsylvania and the Western territory, mine have been mostly employed among the wandering and wilder tribes who inhabit this remote and boundless region."

"I have often heard your pious friend's name," said Reginald ; "he enjoys the reputation of being the most eminent Indian linguist in our country, and he is supposed to know the Delaware language as well as his own."

"He is indeed," said Paul, "the most skilful and successful labourer in this rude, but not unfruitful vineyard ; now and then, at remote intervals, I contrive, by means of some returning hunter or Indian agent, to communicate with him, and his letters always afford me matter of consolation and encouragement ; though I was much cast down when he announced to me the cruel and wanton massacre of his Indian flock near the banks of the Ohio."

"I have heard of it," replied Reginald ; "I re-

gret to say that the outrage was committed not very far from the spot where my father lives."

"Do you live in that neighbourhood?" exclaimed the Missionary, suddenly catching his arm; "then you may, perhaps, — but no, it cannot be," he muttered to himself. "This youth can know nothing of it."

"My honoured friend," replied Reginald, colouring at the idea suggested by the words which he had overheard. "I trust you do not believe that my father or any of my kindred had a share in those atrocities!"

"You misunderstood me altogether, I assure you," answered the Missionary; "my exclamation had reference to another subject. But I see War-Eagle coming this way, probably he is bent upon some hunting excursion in which you may wish to be his companion."

"I shall gladly do so," replied Reginald, "as soon as I have breakfasted; my faithful follower, Perrot, desired very much that I should taste some collops of venison, which he said that he could dress in a style somewhat superior to that of the Indian cookery. Will you share them with me?"

The Missionary excused himself, as he had already taken his morning meal, and was about to return to the tent of Prairie-bird.

Reginald assured the good man of the pleasure

which he had found in his conversation, and expressed a hope that he would be enabled soon to enjoy it again, as there was much information respecting the habits, religion, and character of the different Indian tribes which he felt anxious to acquire, and which none could be better able to communicate.

“Whatever instruction or information I may have collected during my residence among them, is freely at your service,” replied Paul Müller; “and if you find yourself in any difficulty or embarrassment where my advice can be of use, you may always command it. You know,” he added, smiling, “they consider me Great Medicine, and thus I am able to say and do many things among them which would not be permitted in another white man.” So saying, he shook hands with Reginald, and returned slowly towards the encampment.

War-Eagle now came up, and greeting his friend with his usual cordiality, inquired whether he would accompany him in the chase of the elk, herds of which had been seen at no great distance. Reginald acceded to the proposal, and, having hastily despatched the collops prepared by Perrot, the two friends left the village on foot, and took their way towards the timber in the valley.

The day was hot, and the speed at which the

agile Indian unconsciously strode along, would have soon discomfited a less active pedestrian than Reginald; but having been well seasoned in his hunting excursions with Baptiste, he found no difficulty in keeping pace with his friend, and he amused himself as they went, by asking him a variety of questions respecting the country, the tribe, and its language, to all of which War-Eagle replied with much intelligence and candour.

As Reginald had not seen Wingenund, he asked his companion how it happened that the youth did not accompany them. "He is gone," replied War-Eagle, "to bring turkeys to the camp."

"Does he shoot them?" inquired Reginald.

"No, he takes them — my white brother shall see; it is not far from the Elk Path."

When they reached the wooded bottom, War-Eagle struck into a small track which seemed to have been made by a streamlet in spring, and, having followed it for about a mile, they came to a more open woodland scene, where the Indian pointed, as they passed along, to scattered feathers and foot-tracks of turkeys in abundance. They had not proceeded far, when he uttered a low exclamation of surprise as he discovered Wingenund stretched at the foot of a tree, with his eyes busily fixed upon something which he held in his hand, and which so rivetted his attention that he was not aware of their approach. Beside him lay two

old and two young turkeys which he had caught and killed; the friends had not looked at him many seconds, before he raised his eyes and perceived them; starting to his feet he made an ineffectual attempt to conceal that which he had been holding in his hand, which was, in fact, a sheet of coarse white paper. Reginald drew near and said to him, "Come, Wingenund, you must show Netis what you hold in your hand; I am sure it is no harm, and if it is a secret, I will keep it."

Wingenund, in some confusion, handed the scroll to Reginald, who saw at the first glance that it was a fragment of an elementary vocabulary of Delaware and English words, written in a free bold character; he ran his eye over the paper which contained chiefly phrases of the most simple kind, such as, "*N'menne*, I drink," "*N'ani pa wi*, I stand." "*Tokelân* it rains," "*Loo*, true," "*Yuni*, this," "*Na-ni*, that," &c., &c.; and a smile came over his features when his eye met his own name, "*Netis*," with its translation, "dear friend." Below this he read, "*N'quti*," Nisha, Nacha, Newo, and a succession of single words, which he rightly conjectured to be numerals, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., and at the bottom of the page was a long sentence in the Lenape tongue, which began as follows:—" *Ki wetochemelenk talli epian awassa-*

game, &c.”—“What is this last sentence, Wing-nund?” inquired Reginald.

“It is the prayer,” replied the youth, “that the Good Spirit taught the white men to say, when he came to live among them.”

“And who wrote all these words for you?”

“Prairie-bird wrote them, and everyday she teaches me to understand the marks on the paper.”

Reginald’s eyes strayed unconsciously to that part of the sheet where he had seen his own name written by the Prairie-bird’s hand. “Happy boy!” he mentally ejaculated, “to sit at her feet and draw instruction from her lips! With such a teacher, methinks I could learn the Lenape tongue in a month!—What says my brother?” continued he aloud, addressing War-Eagle, whose fine countenance wore an expression of indifference, almost amounting to contempt—“What says my brother of this paper?”

“It is perhaps good,” replied the Indian, gravely; “for the black father, and for the white man—but not for the Lenape. The Great Spirit has given him a heart to feel, and a hand to fight, and eyes to see the smallest track on the grass—that is enough. Our fathers knew no more, and they were great, and strong, and brave! Chiefs among the nations! What are we now—few, and weak, and wandering; it is better for us to live and die

like them, and we shall hunt with them in the happy fields. Let us go and show Netis where Wingenund takes the turkeys." So saying, he turned and led the way, followed by his two companions.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARRIVAL AT MOOSHANNE.—A CALM ASHORE AFTER A
STORM AT SEA.

WHILE the events, narrated in the preceding chapter, were occurring in the Western wilderness, the family at Mooshanne had been thrown into a state of the greatest dismay and confusion, by the arrival of Captain L'Estrange's first letter, announcing the flight of Ethelston with his daughter, and depicting his conduct in the blackest colours. Colonel Brandon had perused its contents half a dozen times, and they had produced traces of anxiety upon his countenance, too evident to escape the observation of Lucy, so that he was obliged to break to her by degrees the painful intelligence of her lover's infidelity; with a calmness that surprised him, she insisted on reading the letter; as she proceeded her brow crimsoned with indignation, and those blue eyes, usually beaming with the gentlest expression, flashed with an angry lustre.

Colonel Brandon knew full well the affection

she had long conceived for Ethelston, and though his own feelings were deeply wounded by the misconduct of one whom he had loved and trusted as a son, they were, at present, overpowered by the fears which he entertained of the effect which this unexpected blow might produce on Lucy's health and happiness. He was, therefore, relieved by observing the anger expressed on her countenance, and prepared himself to hear the deserved reproaches on her former lover, which seemed ready to burst from her tongue. What was his surprise when he saw her tear the letter in pieces before his face, and heard her, while she set her pretty little foot upon them, exclaim,

“Dear, dear father, how could you for a moment believe such a tale of vile, atrocious falsehood?”

However disinclined the Colonel might be to believe anything to the disadvantage of Ethelston, there was so much circumstantial evidence to condemn him, that he felt it his duty to prepare his child for the worst at once, and to point out to her how they already knew that Ethelston had been wounded and conveyed to the house of L'Estrange, that his long absence was unexplained, and lastly that the character of the French Commodore, as an officer, and a man of honour, was unimpeached.

Lucy heard him to the end, the glow on her

cheek assumed a warmer hue, and the little foot beat with a nervous and scarcely perceptible motion on the floor, as she replied, "Father, I will believe that the letter is a forgery, or that the French officer, or Commodore, or Admiral, is a madman, but never that Ethelston is a villain."

"My dear Lucy," said the Colonel; "I am almost as unwilling to think ill of Ethelston as you can be yourself; but, alas! I have seen more than you of the inconstancy of men; and I know, too well, that many who have enjoyed a good reputation, have yet been found unable to withstand temptation, such as may have beset Ethelston while an inmate of the same house with the Creole beauty—"

"Dear Father," answered Lucy, colouring yet more deeply; "though it were possible that Ethelston, in the presence of greater attractions, may have yielded to them his affections and withdrawn them from one who had hoped to possess and treasure them for life, though this may be possible, it is not possible that he should be guilty of a violation of the laws of hospitality and honour, such as that slanderous paper lays to his charge; promise me, dearest father, to suspend your belief, and never to speak on this subject again, until it is God's pleasure that the truth shall be brought to light."

"I promise you, my sweet child," said her

father ; " and may that Merciful Being grant that your trust be not disappointed."

" I have no fears," said Lucy, and as she spoke her eyes beamed with that full undoubting love, such as can only be felt by one who has never known what it is to deceive or to be deceived.

Days and weeks passed on without any intelligence of Ethelston ; and while the fears of Colonel Brandon become more confirmed, the agony of suspense, and the sickness of deferred hope began to prey upon the spirits of his daughter ; she never alluded to the forbidden subject, but her nervous anxiety, when the weekly letter-bag was opened, clearly showed that it was ever in her mind ; nevertheless she continued her occasional excursions to Marietta, and visited, as usual, those around Mooshanne who were sick or in distress, so that neither her mother, nor aunt Mary, detected the anxiety by which she was tortured. One evening, half an hour before sunset, as the family party were seated at their simple supper, the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard approaching at full speed, from which the rider dismounted, and lifting the latch of the unlocked door, entered the house. Traversing the vestibule with hasty strides, and apparently guided by instinct to the apartment in which the family were assembled, he threw open the door, and Ethelston stood before the astonished party. His countenance was hag-

gard from fatigue and exposure to the sun, and his whole appearance indicated exhaustion. Lucy turned deadly pale, and Colonel Brandon's constrained manner, as he rose from his chair, must have convinced the new comer that his return was productive of other feelings than those of unmingled pleasure. He was moving, however, a few steps forward to pay his first respects to Mrs. Brandon, when the Colonel, touching him lightly on the arm, said, "Mr. Ethelston, I must crave a few words with you in the adjoining room."

Hitherto Lucy had remained silent, with her eyes fixed intently on Ethelston's countenance, he returned her look with one as long and fixed, the expression of his eyes was mournful, rather than joyous, but there was no trace of uneasiness or of shame. Springing from her seat, she placed her hand imploringly on the Colonel's arm, saying,

"Dear father, I told you so from the first—I knew it always—I read it now plain as the sun in heaven—that vile letter *was* a string of falsehoods—he is returned as he left us, with an untarnished honour."

"Thank you, dear Lucy," said Ethelston, advancing and pressing her extended hands to his lips; "blessings on that trusting affection which has rendered it impossible for you to believe ought to the prejudice of one on whom you have deigned to fix it. Colonel Brandon," he continued, "I

can guess how you have been misled, and appearances were, for a short time, so much against me, that I acquit, of all intentional malice, those who have misled you ! Judge for yourself whether, if I were stained by the crime of which I have been accused, I could now ask, on my bended knee, for the blessing of you, my second father, and thus hold in mine, as I dare to do, the hand of your pure, trusting, and beloved child."

There was a truth in every tone of his voice, and a convincing dignity in his manner that swept away all doubts like a torrent ; the Colonel embraced him with cordial affection : Aunt Mary kissed her favourite nephew over and over again, Mrs. Brandon wept tears of joy on his neck, and Lucy was so overpowered by delight, that she was perhaps scarcely conscious of all that passed around.

After they were in some degree recovered from their emotion, and had pressed Ethelston to take some refreshment ; he said to the Colonel, " Now I am prepared to give you an account of my adventures, and to explain those circumstances that led to the misunderstanding under which you have so long laboured."

" Not a word—not a word will I hear of explanation, to-night, my dear boy," replied the Colonel. " I am already ashamed that I have not shown the same undoubting confidence in your

rectitude, both of purpose and conduct, that has been evinced from first to last by Lucy. You are weary and exhausted, the agitation of this scene has been trying to all of us ; we will defer your narrative until to-morrow. Our first duty this evening, is to return our thanks to Providence for having protected you through all danger, and restored you safe to the comforts of home."

As he spoke, the worthy old gentleman took down a bible from the shelf, and, having desired Lucy to summon all the servants into the room, he read an appropriate chapter, and added to the selected prayer for the evening, a few impressive and affecting words of thanksgiving, for the safe return of the long lost member of the family.

This duty was scarcely concluded, when the outer door was violently opened ; a heavy step was heard approaching, and, without waiting to be admitted or announced, the sturdy figure of Gregson entered the room.

"The captain himself, as I live," said the honest mate. "Beg pardon, Colonel Brandon, but I heard a report of his having been seen going ten knots an hour through Marietta. So up I sticks, made sail, and was in his wake in less time than our nigger cook takes to toss off a glass of grog."

"Give me your hand, Gregson," said Ethelston, kindly ; "there is not a truer, nor an honest one between Marietta and China."

"Thank ye, thank ye, Captain," said the mate, giving him a squeeze that would have broken the knuckles of any hand but a sailor's; "the flipper's well enough in its way, and I trust the heart's somewhere about the right place; but what the devil have they been at with you in Guadaloupe," added he, observing his chief's wearied and wasted appearance; "considering how long those rascally Frenchmen have had you in dock, they've sent you to sea in precious state, both as to hull and rigging."

"I confess I am not over ship-shape," said Ethelston, laughing, "but my present condition is more owing to the fatigues of my tedious journey from New Orleans, than to any neglect on the part of the Frenchmen."

The Colonel now invited the worthy mate to be seated, and Lucy brewed for him, with her own fair fingers, a large tumbler of toddy, into which, by her father's desire, she poured an extra glass of rum. Ethelston, pretending to be jealous of this favour, insisted on his right to a draught, containing less potent ingredients, but administered by the same hand, and an animated conversation ensued, in the course of which Gregson inquired after the welfare of his old friend Cupid, the black cook.

"Poor fellow, he is no more," replied Ethelston, in a tone of deep feeling; "he died as he

had lived, proud, brave, faithful to the last. I cannot tell you the story now, it is too sad a one for this our first evening at home ;" as he spoke, his eyes met those of Lucy, and there he read all that his overcharged heart desired to know.

Soon after the allusion to this melancholy incident, the little party broke up ; the evening being already far advanced, Gregson returned to Marietta ; and the members of the colonel's family retired to their respective apartments, leaving Etta alone in the drawing-room. For a few minutes he walked up and down, and pressed his hand upon his forehead, which throbbed with various and deep emotions. He took up the music whereon Lucy had written her name, the needlework on which her fingers had been employed ; he sat down on the chair she had just left, as if to satisfy himself with the assurance that all around him was not a dream ; and again he vented the full gratitude of his heart in a brief but earnest ejaculation of thanksgiving. After a short indulgence in such meditations, he retired to that rest of which he stood so much in need. The room that had been prepared for him was up stairs, and, on crossing a broad passage that led to it, he suddenly met Lucy, who was returning to her own from her mother's apartment. Whether this meeting was purely accidental, or whether Lucy remembering that she had not said Good-night,

quite distinctly to her lover, lingered in her mother's room until she heard his step on the stair, we have no means of ascertaining, and therefore leave it undecided; certain it is, however, that they did meet in the passage above mentioned, and that Ethelston putting down his candle on a table that stood by, took Lucy's unresisting hand and pressed it in his own; he gazed on her blushing countenance with a intensity that can only be understood by those who, like him, have been suddenly restored to a beloved one, whose image had been ever present during a long absence, assuaging the pain of sickness, comforting him in trials, dwelling with him in the solitude of a prison, and sustaining him in the extremest perils of the storm, the fight, and the shipwreck! Though he had never been formally betrothed to her in words, and though his heart was now too full to give utterance to them, he had heard enough below to satisfy him that she had never doubted his faith—he felt that their troth was tacitly plighted to each other, and now it was almost unconsciously that their lips met and sealed the unspoken contract.

That first, long, passionate, kiss of requited love! Its raptures have been the theme of glowing prose, of impassioned verse, in all ages and climes; the powers of language have been exhausted upon it, the tongue and the pen of Genius have, for cen-

turies borrowed for its description the warmest hues of fancy and imagination—and yet how far short do they fall of the reality! how impossible to express in words an electric torrent of feeling, more tumultuous than joy, more burning than the desert's thirst,—yet sweeter and more delicious than childhood's dream of Paradise, pouring over the heart a stream of bliss, steeping the senses in oblivion of all earthly cares, and so mysteriously blending the physical with the immaterial elements of our nature, that we feel as if, in that embrace, we could transfuse a portion of our soul and spirit into the beloved object, on whose lip that first kiss of long-treasured love is imprinted.

Brief and fleeting moments! they are gone almost before the mind is conscious of them! They could not, indeed, be otherwise than brief, for the agony of joy is like that of pain, and exhausted nature would sink under its continued excess. Precious moments, indeed! to none can they be known more than once in life; to very many, they can never be known at all. They can neither be felt nor imagined by the mere worldling, nor the sensualist; the sources of that stream of bliss must be unadulterated by aught low, or selfish; it is not enough that

“Heart and soul and sense in concert move;”

desire must go hand in hand with purity, and

virtue be the handmaid of passion, or the blissful scene will lose its fairest and brightest hues.

The step of some servant was heard approaching, and Lucy, uttering a hasty good-night, returned to her room, where she bolted her door, and gave herself up to the varied emotions by which she was overcome. Tears bedewed her eyes, but they were not tears of grief; her bosom was agitated, but it was not the agitation of sorrow; her pillow was sleepless, but she courted not slumber, for her mind dwelt on the events of the past day, and gratitude for her lover's return, together with the full assurance of his untarnished honour, and undiminished affection, rendered her waking thoughts sweeter than any that sleep could have borrowed from the Land of Dreams.

On the following morning, after breakfast, when the family were assembled in the library, Ethelston, at the request of Colonel Brandon, commenced the narrative of his adventures. As the reader is already acquainted with them, until the closing scene of poor Nina's life, we shall make mention of that part of his tale, no further than to state that, so far as truth would permit, in all that he told as well as all that he forbore to tell, he feelingly endeavoured to shield her memory from blame; the sequel of his story we shall give in his own words.

"I remained only a few days with L'Estrange after his daughter's death ; during which time I used my best endeavours to console him ; but, in spite of the affectionate kindness which he showed me, I felt that my presence must ever recall and refresh the remembrance of his bereavement, and I was much relieved when the arrival of one of his other married daughters with her family, gave me an excuse and an opportunity for withdrawing from Guadaloupe. The vessel which had brought them from Jamaica proposed to return immediately, and I easily obtained L'Estrange's permission to sail with her, only on the condition of not serving against France during the continuance of these hostilities : when I bade him farewell he was much affected, and embraced me as if he were parting with a son, so I have at least the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that I retain his best wishes and his esteem.

"My voyage to Port-royal was prosperous ; on arriving I found a brig laden with fruit just about to sail, in a few days, for New Orleans. I confess I did not much like the appearance either of the vessel, or her commander, but such was my impatience to return to Mooshanne, that I believe I would have risked the voyage in an open boat," here Ethelston looked at Lucy, on whose countenance a blushing smile showed that she well knew the meaning of his words. "I embarked," con-

tinued he, "accompanied by my faithful Cupid, on board the 'Dos Amigos,' the captain was an ignorant rum-drinking Creole, besides himself there was only one white man in the crew, and the coloured men were from all countries and climates, the most reckless and turbulent gang that I had ever seen on board a ship. During the first half of the voyage, the weather being favourable, we crept along the southern coast of Cuba, and passed almost within sight of the Isla de Pinos, which I had so much cause to remember; thence we steered a north-westerly course, and doubled the Cape of Saint Antonio in safety, whence we had a prospect of a fair run to the Belise; but, two days after we had lost sight of the Cuban coast, it came on to blow a gale of wind which gradually increased until it became almost a hurricane from the south-west.

The brig drove helplessly before it, and from her leaky and shattered condition, as well as from the total want of seamanship exhibited by her drunken captain, I hourly expected that she would founder at sea; for twenty-four hours the gale continued with unabated violence, and the weather was so thick that no object could be discerned at two hundred yards distance; I remained constantly on deck, giving such assistance as I could render, and endeavouring to keep the Captain's lips from the rum-bottle, to which he

had more frequent recourse as the danger became more imminent. Being, at length, wearied out, I threw myself in my clothes on my cot, and soon fell asleep. I know not how long I slept, but I was awakened by a violent shock, accompanied by a grating grinding sound, from which I knew in an instant that the brig had struck on a rock ; almost before I had time to spring from my cot, Cupid dashed into the cabin and seizing me with the force of a giant, dragged me on deck. At this moment the foremast fell with a tremendous crash, and a heavy sea swept over the devoted vessel, carrying away the boat, all loose spars, and many of the crew ; Cupid and I held on by the main rigging and were not swept away ; but wave after wave succeeded each other with resistless fury, and in a few moments we were both struggling, half stunned and exhausted, in the abyss of waters, holding on convulsively to a large hen-coop, which had providentially been thrown between us.

“One wild shriek of despair reached my ear, after which nothing was heard but the tumultuous roar of the angry elements.”

At this part of Ethelston's narrative, Lucy covered her face with her hands, as if she would thereby shut out the dreadful view, and in spite of all her struggle for self-command, a tear stole down her colourless cheek.

“It was, indeed, a fearful moment,” he continued,

"and yet I did not feel deserted by hope ; I was prepared for death, I prayed fervently, and I felt that my prayer was not unheard ; even then, in that strife of foaming sea and roaring blast, God sent the vision of an angel to comfort and sustain me ! It wore the form of one who has ever dwelt in my thoughts by day, and in my dreams by night ; who seemed as near to me then, as she does now that her gentle tears are flowing at this recital of my trials."

While speaking the last words, his low voice trembled until it fell into a whisper, and Lucy, overcome by her feeling, would have fallen from her chair, had not his ready arm supported her. A dead silence reigned in the room, Aunt Mary wept aloud, and Colonel Brandon walked to the window to conceal his emotion. After a few minutes, as he turned again towards them ; Ethelston, who still supported Lucy, beckoned him to approach, and addressing him in a tone of deep and earnest feeling, said,

"Colonel Brandon, my guardian, friend and benefactor ; add yet this one to all your former benefits, and my cup of gratitude will be full indeed," as he spoke he took the unresisting hand of Lucy in his own ; the Colonel looked inquiringly and affectionately at his daughter, who did not speak, but raised her tearful eyes to his, with an expression not to be misunderstood. Pressing

their united hands between his own, and kissing Lucy's forehead he whispered,

"God bless you, my children:" after a pause he added, with a suppressed smile, "Ethelston shall finish his narrative presently;" and taking Aunt Mary's arm he left the room.

We will imitate the Colonel's discretion, and forbear to intrude upon the sacred quiet of a scene where the secret long-cherished love of two overflowing hearts was at length unreservedly interchanged; we need only say that ere the Colonel returned with Aunt Mary, after an absence of half an hour, Lucy's tears were dried, and her cheeks were suffused with a mantling blush, as she sprung into her father's arms, and held him in a long and silent embrace.

"Come, my child," said the Colonel, when he had returned her affectionate caresses; "sit down, and let us hear the conclusion of Ethelston's adventures—we left him in a perilous plight, and I am anxious to hear how he escaped from it."

"Not without much suffering, both of mind and body, my dear sir," continued Ethelston in a serious tone of voice; "for the sea dashed to and fro with such violence the frail basket-work to which Cupid and I were clinging, that more than once I was almost forced to quit my hold, and it was soon evident that its buoyant power was not sufficient to save us both, especially as

Cupid's bulk and weight were commensurate with his gigantic strength; his coolness under these trying circumstances was remarkable; observing that I was almost fainting from the effects of a severe blow on the head from a floating piece of the wreck, he poured into my mouth some rum from a small flask that he had contrived to secure, and then replacing the stopper, he thrust the flask into my breast pocket, saying, "Capt'n drink more when he want:" at this moment a large spar from the wreck was driven past us, and the faithful creature said, "Capt'n, hencoop not big enough for two, Cupid swim and take spar to ride;" and ere I could stop him he loosed his hold and plunged into the huge wave to seize the spar; more I could not see, for the spray dashed over me, and the gloom and the breakers hid him in a moment from my sight. I felt my strength failing, but enough remained for me to loose a strong silk kerchief from my neck, and to lash myself firmly to the hencoop; again and again the wild sea broke over me: I felt a tremendous and stunning blow—as I thought, the last, and I was no more conscious of what passed around.

"When I recovered my senses I found myself lying upon some soft branches, and sheltered by low bushes, a few hundred yards from the sea-beach; two strange men were standing near me, and gave evident signs of satisfaction when they saw my

first attempts at speech and motion ; they made me swallow several morsels of sea biscuit steeped in rum, and I was soon so far restored as to be able to sit up, and to learn the particulars of my situation. The island near which the brig had been wrecked, was one of the Tortugas ; the two men who had carried me up to a dry spot from the beach, belonged to a small fishing-craft, which had put in two days before the hurricane for a supply of water, and in hopes of catching turtle. Their vessel was securely moored in a little natural harbour, protected by the outer ledge of rocks ; the reef on which the brig had struck was upwards of a mile from the spot where they had found me, and I could not learn from them that they had seen any portion of her wreck, or any part of her crew alive or dead.

“As soon as my bruised condition permitted me to drag my limbs along, I commenced a careful search along the low rocky shore, in hopes of learning something of the fate of Cupid, and at length was horrified on discovering the mutilated remains of the faithful creature, among some crevices in the rocks. He had clung to the spar which still lay beside him with the pertinacious strength of despair ; his hands and limbs were dreadfully mangled, and his skull fractured by the violence with which he had been driven on the reef. I remembered how he had

resigned the hencoop to save my life; and the grief that I evinced for his loss moved the compassion of the fishermen, who aided me to bury him decently on the island.

“ We remained there two days longer, until the gale had subsided, during which time I frequently visited poor Cupid’s grave; and though many of our countrymen would be ashamed of owning such regret for one of his colour, I confess that when on that lonely spot I called to mind his faithful services, and his last noble act of generous courage, I mourned him as a friend and brother.

“ When the fishing-smack put to sea I prevailed on her captain to visit the reef where the brig had struck, but we found not a spar nor plank remaining; nor am I to this moment aware whether any others of her crew survived the wreck, but it is more than probable that they perished to a man. Upon the promise of a considerable sum of money, I prevailed upon the fishermen to give me a passage to New Orleans, where we arrived without accident or adventure, and my impatience to reach home only permitted me to stay in that city a few hours, when, having provided myself with a horse, I rode on hither by forced marches, and arrived in the travel-worn condition that you observed yesterday.”

CHAPTER IV.

AN ELK-HUNT.—REGINALD MAKES HIS FIRST ESSAY IN SURGERY.

—THE READER IS ADMITTED INTO PRAIRIE-BIRD'S TENT.

WE left Reginald Brandon in the skirt of the forest bounding the Western Prairie, accompanied by Wingenund and War-Eagle. The latter, having taken the lead, conducted his companions through a considerable extent of ground, covered with bushes of alder and scrub-oak, until they reached an open forest glade, where the Indian pointed out to Reginald a large square building, composed of rough logs, and covered with the same material. In the centre of one side was a low aperture, or door, about fifteen inches in height, in front of which was a train of maize laid by Wingenund; on approaching this turkey-pen, or trap, they observed that there were already two prisoners, a large gobbler and a female bird, although not more than an hour had elapsed since the lad had taken out the four turkeys which have been before mentioned. When the captives became aware of the

approach of the party, they ran about the pen from side to side, thrusting out their long necks, peering through the crevices in the logs, jumping and flying against the top, in their violent endeavours to escape.

"Do they never stoop their heads," enquired Reginald, "and go out at the same door by which they entered?"

"Never," replied Wingenund.

"That is singular," said Reginald, "for the bird is in general very sagacious and difficult to be taken or killed;—how does it happen that they are so unaccountably stupid as not to go out where they came in?"

Before answering the question addressed to him, Wingenund cast a diffident look towards War-Eagle, and on receiving from the chief a sign to reply, he said,

"Netis knows that the Great Spirit distributes the gifts of wisdom and cunning like the sunshine and the storm, even the Black-Father does not understand all his ways. How can Wingenund tell why the turkey's eye is so quick, his ear so sharp, his legs so swift?—and yet he is sometimes a fool; when he picks up the maize, his head is low; he walks through the opening; he is in a strange place; he is frightened; and fear takes from him all the sense that the Great Spirit had given him. Wingenund knows no more."

"My young brother speaks truly and wisely beyond his years," said Reginald kindly. "It is as you say, fear makes him forget all the capacities of his nature; it is so with men, why should it be otherwise with birds? Does War-Eagle say nothing?"

"My brother's words are true," replied the chief, gravely; "he has picked out one arrow, but many remain in the quiver."

"My brother speaks riddles," said Reginald. "I do not understand him."

"Fear is a bad spirit," replied the chief, raising his arm and speaking with energy. "It creeps round the heart of a woman, and crawls among the lodges of the Dahcotahs; it makes the deer leap into the river when he would be safer in the thicket; it makes the turkey a fool and keeps him in the pen: but there are other bad spirits that make the heart crooked and the eyes blind."

"Tell me, how so?" enquired Reginald, desirous of encouraging his Indian friend to continue his illustration.

"Does my brother know the antelope," replied War-Eagle; "he is very cunning and swift; his eye is quick as the turkey's; the hunter could not overtake him: but he lies down in a hollow and hides himself; he fastens a tuft of grass to his bow and holds it over his head; the Bad Spirit gets into the antelope; he becomes a fool; he

comes nearer and nearer to look at the strange sight ;—the hunter shoots and he dies. There are many bad spirits. The Wyandot who struck at my white brother, he was a cunning snake ; he had taken scalps, the ball of his rifle did not wander ; if he had crept in the bushes on my brother's path, Netis would now be in the happy hunting-fields of the white warriors. But a Bad Spirit took him ; he offered food while his heart was false, and he thrust his head under the tomahawk of War-Eagle. There are many bad spirits. —I have spoken."

Reginald listened with interest to these sentiments of his Indian friend, expressed, as they were, in broken sentences and in broken English, the purport of them being, however, exactly conveyed in the foregoing sentences ; but he refrained from pursuing the subject further, observing that War-Eagle was slinging the turkeys over Wingenund's shoulder, and preparing to pursue their course in search of the elk. Leaving the youth to return with his feathered burden to the encampment, the two friends continued their excursion, War-Eagle leading the way, and stopping every now and then to examine such tracks as appeared to him worthy of notice. They had not proceeded far, when they reached a spot where the path which they were following crossed a small rivulet, and, the soil being soft on its bank,

there were numerous hoof-prints of deer and elk, but so confused by the trampling of the different animals, that Reginald could not distinguish the one from the other. It was not so, however, with the Indian, for, pointing downward to a track at his foot, he made a sign, by raising both his hands above his head, to indicate a pair of antlers, and whispered to Reginald "very big."

"An elk?" enquired the latter; making a silent affirmative sign, War-Eagle pursued the trail which conducted them to the top of a small rising ground, where it appeared to branch in several directions and became almost imperceptible from the shortness of the grass and the hardness of the soil. But these seemed to offer no impediment to the Indian's pursuit of his quarry, for turning short at a right angle to their former course, he descended the hillock in a different direction, walking with a swift noiseless step, as if he saw his game before him.

Reginald's surprise overcame even his eagerness for the sport, trained as he had been in the woods, and justly held one of the quickest and most skillful hunters in the territory; he had looked in vain on the ground which they were now traversing for the slightest point or footmark; touching, therefore, his friend lightly on his shoulder, he whispered, "Does my brother guess the elk's path?—or can he smell it like the Spaniard's dog?"

A good-humoured smile played on the Delaware's lip as he replied, "The trail of the elk is broad and easy; War-Eagle could follow it by the moon's light! My white brother will see; he is an elk chief; his squaws are with him."

As he spoke he showed several marks which Reginald could scarcely distinguish on the short grass; a few yards further War-Eagle added, pointing to a low bush beside them, "If Netis does not see the elk's foot, he can see his teeth."

On examining the bush Reginald perceived that a small fresh twig from the side of it had been recently cropped, and suppressing his astonishment at his friend's sagacity, in following with such apparent ease a trail that to him was scarcely discernible, he allowed him to proceed without further interruption, closely watching his every movement, in the hope that he might be able to discover some of the indications by which the Indian was guided. Moving lightly forward, they soon had occasion again to cross the brook before mentioned; and on the soft edge of its banks, War-Eagle pointed in silence to the track of the large hoof of the elk, and to the smaller print left by the feet of its female companions. Desiring Reginald to remain still, the Indian now crept stealthily forward to the top of a small hillock covered with brushwood, where he lay for a few seconds with his ear touching the ground. Having

once raised his head to look through a low bush in front of him, he sunk again upon the ground, and made a signal for his friend to creep to the spot. Reginald obeyed, and peering cautiously through the leaves of the same bush, he saw the stately elk browsing at a distance of an hundred and fifty yards, the two hinds being beyond him ; the intervening ground being barren and almost flat, offering no cover for a nearer approach, his first impulse was to raise his rifle for a distant shot ; but War-Eagle, gently pressing down the barrel, motioned him to crouch behind the bush. When they were again concealed, the Delaware whispered to his friend, that he would go round and creep on the elk from the opposite quarter.

Reginald in reply pointed to the top branches of a young poplar gently waving in the breeze.

" War-Eagle knows it," said the Indian gravely, " the wind is from that quarter ; it is not good ; but he will try ; if elk smell him, he comes this way, and Netis shoot him." So saying, he crept down the little hillock by the same path which they had followed in the ascent, and then striking off in an oblique direction was soon lost to view.

Reginald, still concealed behind the bush, silent and motionless, with his hand on the lock of his rifle, watched intently every movement of the antlered monarch of the woods ; the latter, unconscious of danger, lazily picked the tenderest shoots

from the surrounding bushes, or tossed his lofty head to and fro, as if to display the ease and grace with which it bore those enormous antlers. More than once, as he turned to brush off from his side some troublesome fly, Reginald thought he had become suddenly aware of the Indian's approach; but it was not so, for in spite of the disadvantage of the wind, the practised Delaware moved towards his unsuspecting prey with the stealthy creep of a panther. Reginald's impatience was such that minutes seemed to him hours; and his fingers played with the lock of his rifle, as if he could no longer control their movement; at length a sudden snort from one of the hinds announced that she smelt or heard some object of alarm as she came trotting to the side of her lordly protector.

Turning himself to windward, and throwing forward his ears, the elk listened for a moment, while his upturned and wide distended nostril snuffed the breeze, to discover the danger of which he had been warned by his mate. That moment was not lost by the Delaware, and the report of his rifle echoed through the forest. Tossing his head with a sudden start the elk fled from his now discovered foe, and came bounding over the barren space in front of the bush where Reginald was concealed. With a coolness that did great credit to his nerves as a hunter, the latter remained

motionless, with his eye on the game and his finger on the trigger, until the elk passed his station at speed ; then he fired, and with so true an aim, that ere it had gone fifty yards, the noble beast fell to the earth, and immediately Reginald's hunting knife put an end to its pain and to its life. The young man looked over the quarry with pride and pleasure, for it was the largest he had ever seen ; and the shot (which had pierced the heart) was well calculated to raise War-Eagle's opinion of his skill in wood-craft. Whilst he was still contemplating the animal's bulk and fine proportions, the exclamation "good !" uttered in English, gave him the first notice that the Delaware was at his side.

"Ha ! my friend," said Reginald, grasping his hand cordially ; "you sent him down towards me in fine style. Tell me, War-Eagle, are there many elks as large in this country ?"

"Not many," replied the Indian ; "War-Eagle told his white brother that the elk's foot on the trail was big."

"Was my brother very far when he shot ?" inquired Reginald ; "when his rifle speaks, the ball does not wander in the air."

"War-Eagle was far," replied the Indian, quietly, "but the elk carries the mark of his rifle—Netis shot better ;" on examination, it appeared that the chief was right. His bullet had passed

through the fleshy part of the animal's neck, but not having cut the wind-pipe, the wound was not mortal, and but little blood had flowed from it.

While the Indian was busied in skinning and cutting up the elk, Reginald amused himself by reconnoitring the ground over which his friend had crept before he shot, and he was struck by the extraordinary sagacity with which the latter had made his approach; for on that side there were but few and scattered bushes, nor was there any rugged or broken ground favorable for concealment.

When the choicest portions of meat were duly separated and enveloped in the skin, War-Eagle hung them up on an adjacent tree, carefully rubbing damp powder over the covering, to protect the meat from the wolves and carrion birds; after which the friends proceeded on their excursion.

Having found fresh tracks of elk leading towards the open Prairie, they followed them, and succeeded in killing two more, after which they returned to the encampment, whence War-Eagle despatched a young Indian with a horse, and with directions as to the locality of the meat, which he was instructed to bring home.

As Reginald walked through the lodges of the Osage village, he observed a crowd of Indians collected before one of them, and curiosity prompted him to turn aside and observe what might be passing. Making his way without difficulty through

the outer circle of spectators, he found himself before a lodge, in front of which a wounded boy of twelve or fourteen years of age was extended on a buffalo-robe. On inquiry, Reginald learnt from an Indian who could speak a few words of English, that the lad had been struck down and trampled on by a vicious horse; although no sounds escaped from his lips, the involuntary writhing of the youthful sufferer, showed the acuteness of the pain which he endured; while a bulky Indian, in the garb of an Osage Medicine-man, was displaying beside him the various absurd mummeries of his vocation.

This native quack was naked to the waist; his breast and back being painted over with representations of snakes and lizards. Instead of the usual breech-cloth, or middle garment, he wore a kind of apron of antelope skins, hemmed, or skirted with feathers of various colours: the borders of his leggings were also adorned with the wings of an owl; in one hand he held a tomahawk, the haft of which was painted white, and in the other a hollow gourd containing a few hard beans, or stones of the wild cherry, which latter instrument he rattled incessantly round the head of his patient, accompanying this *Æsculapian* music with the most grotesque gesticulations, and a sort of moaning howl—all these being intended to exorcise and drive away the evil spirit of pain.

While Reginald was contemplating the strange spectacle with mingled curiosity and compassion, he heard a confused murmur among those Indians nearest to the corner of the lodge, and thought he could distinguish the name of Olitipa; nor was he mistaken, for almost immediately afterwards the crowd divided, and Prairie-bird appeared before the lodge. Her dress was the same as that in which Reginald had before seen, excepting that, in place of the chaplet of wild flowers, she wore on her head a turban of party-coloured silk, the picturesque effect of which blending with her dark hair and the oriental character of her beauty, reminded our hero of those Circassian enchantresses whom he had read of in eastern fable, as ruling satrap or sultan, with a power more despotic than his own!

Prairie-bird, walking gently forward with modest self-possession, took her place by the side of the sufferer, as if unconscious of the numerous eyes that were observing all her movements; the Medicine-man, whose exorcisms had been hitherto attended with no success, retreated into the lodge, whence he narrowly and silently observed the proceedings of his fair rival in the healing art.

It was not difficult for Prairie-bird to ascertain that the boy's hurts were very serious, for the hot brow, the dry lip, the involuntary contortions of the frame, gave clear evidence of acute pain

and fever. She deeply regretted that the Missionary had been absent when she was summoned, as his assistance would have been most useful, nevertheless, she resolved to do all in her power towards the mitigation of sufferings, the cure of which seemed beyond the reach of her simple remedies. Opening a bag that hung at her girdle, she drew from it some linen bandage, and various salves and simples, together with a small case of instruments belonging to Paul Müller, and kneeling by her young patient's side, she breathed a short, but earnest prayer for the blessing of Heaven on her humble exertions. During this pause, the Indians observed a strict and attentive silence; and Reginald felt a kind of awe mingle itself with his impassioned admiration, as he contemplated the unaffected simplicity and loveliness of her kneeling figure.

A serious wound in the young patient's temple claimed her first care, which having washed and closed, she covered with a healing plaster, but observing that the symptoms of fever had rather increased than diminished, she knew that the lancet should be immediately applied, and cast her anxious eyes around in the hope that the Missionary might have heard of the accident, and be now on his way to the lodge. While looking thus around, she became for the first time aware of Reginald's presence, and a slight blush accompa-

nied her recognition of him ; but her thoughts recurring immediately to the object of her present attention, she asked him in a clear low voice to come nearer, on which he moved forward from the circle of spectators, and stood before the lodge.

Prairie-bird, pointing to the form of the young Indian, said in English, "The poor boy is much hurt, he will die if he is not bled ; the Black Father is absent ; can Reginald take blood from the arm ?"

"I do not pretend to much skill in surgery, fair Prairie-bird," replied the young man, smiling ; "but I have learnt to bleed my horse and my dog, and if the necessity be urgent, methinks I can open a vein in this boy's arm without much risk of danger."

"It is indeed urgent," said the maiden, earnestly ; "here are Paul Müller's instruments ; I pray you take a lancet and proceed without delay."

Thus urged, Reginald selected a lancet, and having proved its sharpness, he passed a bandage tightly round the sufferer's arm, and set about his first surgical operation with becoming care and gravity, the Osages drawing near and looking on in attentive silence. Before applying the lancet, he said in a low voice to Prairie-bird, "Must I allow a considerable quantity of blood to flow 'ere I staunch it?" and on her making an affirmative sign, he added, "Let me entreat you to turn your

eyes away, it is not a fitting sight for them, and they might affect the steadiness of my nerves."

With a deep blush Prairie-bird cast down her eyes, and began to employ them busily in searching her little bag for some cordial drinks and healing ointment, to be administered after the bleeding should be over.

Reginald acquitted himself of his task with skill and with complete success, and found no difficulty in staunching the blood, and placing a proper bandage on the arm ; after which the restoratives prepared by Prairie-bird were applied, and in a very short time they had the satisfaction of finding the symptoms of fever and pain subside, and were able to leave the youthful patient to repose, Prairie-bird promising to visit him again on the morrow.

An elderly Brave of the Osages now stepped forward, and presented Prairie-bird with a girdle of cloth, ornamented with feathers, quills, and beads, of the gayest colours, an offering which she received with that modest grace which was inseparable from her every movement ; the same Brave (who was, in fact, the father of the wounded boy,) presented Reginald with a painted buffalo robe, which, as soon as he had displayed its strange designs and devices, he desired a young Indian to convey to the White Chief's lodge. Our hero having, in return, given to the Osage a knife

with an ornamented sheath, which he had worn, in addition to his own, in case of being suddenly called upon to make such a present, prepared to accompany Prairie-bird to her lodge.

As they left the circle, Reginald's eye encountered that of Mahéga, fixed with a scowling expression on himself and his fair companion, but he passed on without noticing the sullen and haughty chief, being resolved not to involve himself in any quarrel in her presence. They walked slowly towards the lodge of Tamenund, and it must be confessed that they did not take exactly the shortest path to it, Reginald leading the way, and Prairie-bird following his occasional deviations with marvellous acquiescence.

The young man turned the conversation on the character of Paul Müller, knowing it to be a subject agreeable to Prairie-bird, and well calculated to give him an opportunity of listening to that voice which was already music to his ear; nor was he disappointed, for she spoke of him with all the warmth of the most affectionate regard; and the expression of her feelings imparted such eloquence to her tongue and to her beaming eyes, that Reginald looked and listened in enraptured silence. As they drew near her tent, she suddenly checked herself, and looking up in his face with an archness that was irresistible, said, "Pray pardon me, I have been talking all

this time, when I ought to have been listening to you, who are so much wiser than myself."

"Say not so," replied Reginald, with an earnestness that he attempted not to conceal: "say not so, I only regret that we have already reached your tent, for I should never be weary of listening to your voice."

Prairie-bird replied with that ingenuous simplicity peculiar to her:

"I am glad to hear you say so, for I know you speak the truth, and it makes me very happy to give you pleasure; now I must go into my tent."

So saying she held out her hand to him, and nothing but the presence of several Indians loitering near, prevented his obeying the impulse which prompted him to press it to his lips; checking it by an effort of prudence, he withdrew into the lodge of Tamenund, and mused on the qualities of this extraordinary child of the wilderness, her beauty, her grace, her dignity, and above all, that guileless simplicity that distinguished her beyond all that he had ever seen; in short, he mused so long on the subject that we will leave him to his meditations, as we fear it must be confessed that he was almost, if not quite, "in love," and the reflections of parties so circumstanced, are rarely interesting to others.

What were the feelings of Prairie-bird when she once more found herself alone in her tent, and

vainly endeavoured to still the unwonted tumult in her heart? Her thoughts, in spite of herself, would dwell on the companion who had escorted her from the Osage lodge; his words still rung in her ears; his image was before her eyes; she felt ashamed that one, almost a stranger, should thus absorb all her faculties, and was the more ashamed from being conscious that she did not wish it were otherwise; her heart told her that it would not exchange its present state of tumult and subjection for its former condition of quiet and peace!

Lest the reader should be inclined to judge her as harshly as she judged herself, we will beg him to remember the circumstances and history of this singular girl. Brought up among a roving tribe of Indians, she had fortunately fallen into the hands of a family remarkable for the highest virtues exhibited by that people; the missionary, Paul Müller, had cultivated her understanding with the most affectionate and zealous care; and he was, with the exception of an occasional trader visiting the tribe, almost the only man of her own race whom she had seen; and though entertaining towards Tamenund the gratitude which his kindness to her deserved, and towards War-Eagle and Wingenund the affectionate regard of a sister, both the knowledge imparted by the Missionary, and her own instinctive feeling, had taught her to consider herself among them as a separate and

isolated being. These feelings she had of course nourished in secret, but they had not altogether escaped the penetration of Wingenund, who, it may be remembered, had told Reginald on their first meeting that the antelope was as likely to pair with the elk, as was his sister to choose a mate among the chiefs of the Osage or the Lenape.

On the return of the two Delawares from their excursion to the Muskingum, Wingenund had related to Prairie-bird the heroic gallantry with which the young white chief had plunged into the river to save War-Eagle's life; he had painted, with untutored but impassioned eloquence, the courage, the gentleness, the generosity, of his new friend. Prairie-bird's own imagination had filled up the picture, and the unseen preserver of her Indian brother was therein associated with all the highest qualities that adorned the heroes of such tales as she had read or heard recounted by the Missionary.

She had reached that age when the female heart, unsupported by maternal protection, and severed from the ties of kindred, naturally seeks for something on which to rest its affection. Are we then to wonder if, when Reginald Brandon first stood before her, when she saw in his noble form and expressive features all her secret imaginations more than realized, when he addressed her in her own tongue, and in a tone of voice gentle

even to tenderness ; are we to wonder, or to blame, this nursling of the wilderness, if the barriers of pride and reserve gave way beneath the flood which swept over them with fresh and irresistible force ? Often had she, on various pretexts, made Wingenund repeat to her the adventures and occurrences of his excursion to the Ohio ; and as the artless boy described, in language as clear as his memory was tenacious, the dwelling of Reginald's father, the range of buildings, the strange furniture, the garden, the winding brook that bounded its enclosure, and above all the fair features and winning gentleness of the Lily of Mooshanne, Prairie-bird would cover her averted face with her hands, as if struggling to banish or to recal some wild delusive dream, and her lips would move in unconscious repetition of " Mooshanne." Surprised at her agitation, Wingenund had once so far laid aside the strictness of Indian reserve as to enquire into its cause, and she replied with a melancholy smile,

" Wingenund has painted the Lily of Mooshanne in colours so soft and sweet, that Olitipa longs to embrace and love her as a sister."

The boy fixed his penetrating eye upon her countenance, in deep expressive silence, the innate delicacy of his feeling triumphed, and Prairie-bird's secret meditations were thenceforward undisturbed.

To return from this retrospective digression. Prairie-bird's tent was divided, by a partition of buffalo skins, into two compartments, in the outer of which was her guitar, the books lent her by the Missionary, a small table and two chairs or rather stools, the latter rudely but efficiently constructed by his own hands; in the corner also stood the chest, where his medicines, instruments, and other few valuables were deposited; in the inner compartment was a bed, composed of Mexican grass, stretched upon four wooden feet, and covered with dressed antelope skins and blankets of the finest quality. Here also was a chest containing her quaint but not ungraceful apparel, and the other requisites for her simple toilet; at night a female slave, a captive taken from one of the southern tribes, slept in the outer compartment, and the ever watchful Wingenund stretched himself on a buffalo robe across the aperture, so that the slumbers of the fair Prairie-bird were securely guarded even during the absence of Paul Müller; and when he was with the tribe, his small tent was separated from hers only by a partition of skins, which in case of alarm might be cut open by a sharp knife in a moment. There was, in truth, little fear for the security of this extraordinary girl, who was looked upon, as we have before observed, by all the tribe with mingled awe and affection.

In the outer of the two compartments above-mentioned she was now sitting, with her eyes cast upon the ground, and her fingers straying unconsciously over the strings of her guitar, when she was aroused from her long reverie by the soft voice of the female slave who had entered unperceived, and who now said, in the Delaware tongue,

"Are Olitipa's ears shut, and is the voice of Wingenund strange to them?"

"Is my brother there," replied the maiden, ashamed at her fit of absence; "tell him, Lita, that he is welcome."

The girl addressed by the name of Lita was about seventeen years of age, small, and delicately formed, exceedingly dark, her wild and changeful countenance being rather of a gipsy than of an Indian character. She had been taken, when a child, by a war-party which had penetrated into the country of the Comanches, a powerful and warlike tribe still inhabiting the extensive prairies on the Mexican and Texian frontier. She was devotedly attached to Prairie-bird, who treated her more like a friend than a slave, but towards all others she observed an habitual and somewhat haughty silence; had her fate condemned her to any other lodge in the encampment, the poor girl's life would have been a continued succession of blows, labour, and suffering; for her spirit was indomitable, and impracticable to every other control than kindness;

but as the good-humoured Tamenund had appropriated her services to his favourite child, she passed most of her time in Olitipa's tent, and thus avoided the ill-usage to which she might otherwise have been exposed.

Such was the girl who now went to the folding aperture of the tent, and desired Wingenund to come in. The youth entered, followed by a boy bearing a large covered dish or basket of wicker-work, which having placed on the table, he withdrew. Prairie-bird could not fail to observe in her young brother's countenance and carriage an unusual stateliness and dignity, and she remarked at the same time, the circumstance of his having brought with him the boy to carry her basket, a service which he had been accustomed to perform with his own hands. Making him a sign to sit down, she thus accosted him, in terms allusive to the customs of the tribe :—

“Has my young brother dreamt? has the breath of the Great Spirit passed over his sleep?”

“It is so,” replied Wingenund. “The Chiefs and the Braves have sat at the council-fire; the name of Wingenund was on their tongues, the deeds of his fathers are not forgotten; he is not to do the work of squaws; his name will be heard among the warriors of the Lenape.”

From this reply Prairie-bird knew that her young brother was about to undergo the fasting,

and other superstitious ordeals, through which those youths were made to pass who wished to be enrolled among the warriors of the tribe at an earlier age than usual; these superstitious observances were repugnant to her good sense and enlightened understanding, and as she had hitherto acted in the capacity of monitress and instructress, she was perhaps not pleased at the prospect of his suddenly breaking loose from her gentle domination; she said to him, therefore, in a tone more grave than usual:

“Wingenund has heard the Black-Father speak; were his ears shut? does he not know that there is one God above, who rules the world alone? the totems,* and the symbols, and the dreams of the medicine-men, are for those poor Indians whose minds are under a cloud. Wingenund cannot believe these things!”

“My sister speaks wisely,” replied the youth; “the wind cannot blow away her words; but Wingenund is of the Lenape, the ancient people; he wishes to live and die among their Braves; he must travel in the path that his fathers have

* Every warrior belonging to the Lenape, Saukee, and all the branches of the great Chippewyan tribe, believes himself to be under the mysterious guardianship of some spirit, usually represented under the form of an animal. This is called his “totem,” and is held sacred by him; thus, a warrior whose totem is a tortoise, or a wolf, or even a snake, will cautiously abstain from injuring or killing one of these animals.

trod, or the warriors will not call his name when the hatchet is dug up."

"Let not the hatchet be dug up," said the maiden, anxiously. "Have I not told my brother that God is the avenger of blood spilt by man? why should his foot be set on the war-path?"

"While the hatchet is below the earth," replied the youth, in the low, musical accent of his tribe, "Wingenund will sit by his sister and listen to her wisdom; he will go out with War-Eagle and bring back the skin of the antelope or the doe for her apparel, the meat of the deer and the bison for her food; he will open his ears to the counsel of the Black-Father, and will throw a thick blanket over thoughts of strife and blood. But if the Washashee" (the Osage) "bears a forked tongue," (here the youth sank his voice to a whisper of deep meaning,) "if he loosens the scalp-knife while his hand is on the poacan,* if the trail of the Dahcotah is found near our village, Wingenund must be awake; he is not a child; the young men will hear his voice, and the old men shall say "He is the son of his father." It is enough; let my sister eat the meat that War-Eagle has sent her; for three suns Wingenund tastes not food."

So saying, the lad threw his robe over his shoulder and left the tent. Prairie-bird gazed

* *Anglicé*, "the pipe."

long and thoughtfully on the spot where her brother's retreating figure had disappeared ; she felt grieved that all the lessons and truths of Christianity which she had endeavoured to instil into his mind, were unable to change the current of his Indian blood ; she had hoped to see him become a civilized man and a convert, and through his amiable character, and the weight of his name, to win over many others of the Lenape tribe ; in addition to this disappointment, she was alarmed at the purport of his parting words ; he had hinted at some treachery on the part of their Osage allies, and that a trail of the Dahcotahs had been seen near the encampment. These subjects of anxiety, added to the excitement which her feelings had lately undergone, so completely engrossed the maiden's attention, that, although the corn-cakes were of the sweetest kind, and the venison of the most delicate flavour, the basket of provisions remained untouched on the table when Paul Müller entered the tent.

His brow was grave and thoughtful, but his countenance relaxed into its usual benevolent expression, as his affectionate pupil sprang forward to greet and welcome him.

"Dear father, I am so glad you are come !" she exclaimed ; "I have been waiting for you most impatiently, and I have been in need of your aid."

"I heard, my child, as I walked through the

village, that you had been tending the wounds of a boy much hurt by a horse; was the hurt beyond your skill?"

"Not exactly," she replied, hesitating. "It was needful that blood should flow from his arm, and, as you were not there, I was forced to ask the assistance of Netis—that is, of Reginald."

"Well," said the Missionary, smiling, "I hope he proved a skilful leech?"

"He would not allow me to look on," she replied; "but, though it was his first trial, he drew the blood and staunched it as skilfully as you could have done it yourself, and then he walked with me to the tent."

"And you conversed much by the way," enquired the Missionary.

"Oh yes; and he made me tell him a great deal about you, and I was ashamed of talking so much; but then he told me that it gave him pleasure to hear me talk. How can it please him to hear me talk, dear father? I know nothing, and he has seen and read so much."

Paul Müller averted his face for a moment to conceal from her the smile which he could scarcely repress, as he replied,

"My child, he has perhaps seen and read much, but the life and habits of the Indians are new to him and of these you can tell him many things that he does not know."

"Tell me, dear father," she said, after a short silence, "are there others like him in my country? I mean, not exactly like him, but more like him than the traders whom I have seen; they are so rough, and they drink fire-water, and they never think of God or his mercies; but he is so noble, his countenance made me afraid at first, but now, when he speaks to me, his voice is as gentle as the fawn calling to its dam!"

Paul Müller saw very well how it fared with the heart of Prairie-bird; he remembered that Reginald was the son of a wealthy proprietor, who would probably have insuperable objections to his son's marrying a foundling of the wilderness, and he hesitated whether he should not give her some warning caution on a subject which he foresaw would so soon affect her peace of mind; on the other hand, he was convinced that Reginald was a man of generous and decided character, and, while he resolved carefully to observe the intercourse between them, he would not mar the unsuspecting purity of her nature, nor throw any obstacle in the way of an attachment which he believed might lead to the happiness of both parties. In coming to this conclusion, it must not be forgotten that he was a Moravian missionary, long resident in the Far-west, and, therefore, not likely to trouble his head with the nice distinctions of European aristocracy. In the coun-

try which was now his home, he might be justified in deeming a match equal, if the man were honest and brave and the bride young and virtuous, without reference to their birth, connexions, or worldly possessions. Under the impression of considerations like these, the Missionary replied to the maiden's enquiry :

“ My child, I will not say that among the cities and settlements of the white men, there are many who would gain by comparison with Reginald Brandon, for not only has he the accidental advantages of *fine* features, and a form singularly graceful and athletic, but^s he seems to me to possess the far higher and rarer qualities of a modest, generous mind, and an honest heart : nevertheless, my child, I will pray you even in respect to him, not to forget what I have told you regarding the general infirmity and waywardness of our nature, keep a watch on your eyes and on your heart, and Providence will rule all for the best :—we will speak no more on this subject now ; let us take some food from the basket on your table.” Prairie-bird spread the simple meal in thoughtful silence, and when the Missionary had asked a blessing on it, they sat down together. After a pause of some minutes she communicated to him her anxiety on account of the hints dropped by Wingenund respecting the suspected treachery of some of their Osage allies, and the circumstance of a hos-

tile trail having been discovered near the encampment. "It is too true," replied the Missionary gravely; "there are signs of approaching strife; and even that boy, whom I have so long endeavoured to instruct and lead aright, his blood is beginning to boil. I fear it is almost as hard for an Indian to change his nature as an Ethiopian his skin. He has told you the truth, and we must be prepared for approaching trouble."

After musing for a few moments, Paul Müller, fixing his eye on Prairie-bird, continued: "Do you know any cause of quarrel between the Osage and Lenape chiefs?"

"None," replied the maiden in unaffected surprise. "How should I know? I go not near their council-fire."

"True," said the Missionary; "but your eyes are not often shut in broad day. Have you spoken to Mahega of late? have you observed him?"

"He has spoken to me more than once, and often meets me on my return from any far lodge in the village. I do not like him; he is fierce and bad, and he beats his young squaw, Wetopa."

"You are right, my child; avoid him; there is evil in that man; but if you meet him, do not show any dislike or suspicion of him; you would only kindle strife; you are among faithful and watchful friends, and if they were all to slumber and sleep, you have a Friend above, whose eye is

never closed, and whose faithfulness is everlasting. Farewell, my child. I must converse awhile with Tamenund. Do you solace an hour with your guitar ; it will put your unquiet thoughts to rest."

Prairie-bird was so accustomed to pay implicit obedience to the slightest wishes and suggestions of her beloved preceptor, that as he left the tent she mechanically took up the guitar, and passed her fingers through the strings. By degrees the soul of music within her was stirred, and ere long vented itself in the following hymn.

The words were in the Delaware tongue, and composed by herself,—the melodies (for more than one were introduced into the irregular chaunt) were such as she had caught or mingled from Indian minstrelsy, and the whole owed its only attraction to the sweet and varied tones of her voice. The first measure was a low recitative which might be thus rendered in English :—

" The sun sinks behind the western hills ;
 Deep red are the curtains of his couch.
 One by one the stars appear ;
 Many they are and lustrous.
 The pale moon is among them !
 They walk in their appointed path,
 Singing on their way, ' God made us all !'
Machelenda sutch Ktelewunsoacan,
 or
 Hallowed be thy name."

Here the measure changed, and sweeping the

strings with a bolder hand, she continued her untutored hymn, blending her Christian creed with the figures and expressions of the people among whom she dwelt.

“The Great Spirit of the Lenape is God.
He has sent his word to gladden the heart of man,
But clouds still darken the minds of the ancient people.
The Great Spirit knows that they are blind and deaf,
Yet His ear is open to hear,
His hand is ready to guide.

(ut suprâ)

Hallowed be thy name !”

Again the measure changed, as in the richest tones of her melodious voice she pursued her theme.

“Sion and the everlasting mountains are thy footstool !
Lightnings are about thy throne.
Thunder is thy voice,
And the evil spirit trembles before thee !
The eagle cannot soar to thy habitation ;
His eye cannot look on thy brightness ;
Yet dost thou give life to the insect,
And breath to the merry wren !
Thou ledest the wild horse to the pasture,
And the thirsty fawn to the stream.
Hallowed be thy name.”

Here the measure resumed its low and plaintive melody as she thus concluded her song.

“Who sings the praise of God ?
It is ‘Prairie-bird,’ the poor child of the wilderness.
But God spurns not her prayer ;

She is a stray-leaf, that knows not the tree
Whence the rude wind hath blown it ;
But God planted the parent stem,
And not a branch or leaf thereof is hid from his sight.
The young whip-poor-will flies to its mother's nest,
The calf bleats to the bison-cow :
No mother's voice says to Olitipa, ' Come here !'
The wide prairie is her home !
God is a Father to Olitipa !
Hallowed be thy name ! "

In singing the last few words, the tones of her voice were " most musical, most melancholy," and though no human eye marked the teardrop that stole down her cheek, it would appear that her song had excited sympathy in some human bosom, for a deep sigh fell upon her ear ; startled at the sound, Prairie-bird looked round her tent, but no one could be seen ; she listened, but it was not repeated, and the maiden remained unconscious that at the very first touch of her guitar Reginald had crept out of the adjoining lodge, and, enveloped in a buffalo robe on the grass at the back of her tent, had heard from beginning to end her plaintive hymn, and had paid the unconscious tribute of a heavy sigh to the touching pathos of its closing strain.

CHAPTER V.

SYMPTOMS OF A RUPTURE BETWEEN THE DELAWARES AND OSAGES.—MAHEGA COMES FORWARD IN THE CHARACTER OF A LOVER.—HIS COURTSHIP RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION.

PAUL MULLER, having left the lodge of Prairie-bird, fulfilled his intention of entering that of Tamenund: he found the venerable chieftain seated upon a buffalo robe; his back leaned against a bale of cloth, a highly ornamented pipe-stem at his lips, while from its other extremity, a thin column of smoke rising in wavy folds, found its way out of the accidental rents and crevices in the skins which covered the lodge. War-Eagle was listening in an attitude of respectful attention to the words which fell from his father; but the subject of conversation was evidently of some importance, as the women and the youths were whispering together at a distance from the two principal persons. The entrance of the Missionary was not unnoticed, for Tamenund made him a signal to draw near and sit down; several times the pipe was passed round in silence, when the old chief, addressing his

guest in the Delaware tongue, said, "The Black Father knows that there are dark clouds in the sky!"

"He does," replied the Missionary. A glance of intelligence passed between War-Eagle and Tamenund, as the latter proceeded.

"What says the Black-Father? Is the storm to break, or will the sun shine again?"

"The Great Spirit only knows," replied the Missionary; "if the sun shines, we will be thankful, if the storm falls, we will wrap round us the cloak of patience."

A fierce gleam shot from the young chief's eye, but he spoke not a word until Tamenund addressed him thus:—"What says War-Eagle? let him speak."

"The snows of many winters are on my father's forehead; the Black-Father has learnt wisdom from the Great Spirit; it is more fitting for War-Eagle to listen than to speak," replied the young man, curbing the angry thoughts that glowed in his breast.

"Nay, my son," said the Missionary, "let War-Eagle speak, and his saying be afterwards weighed by the ag- heads."

War-Eagle then proceeded to explain how Wingenund, in returning from the turkey-pen, had caught a glimpse of a distant figure, whom he knew at a glance to belong to another tribe. Hastily concealing himself among the bushes, he

waited till the strange Indian passed, and then resolving to watch him, crept stealthily on his trail.

Having made his way to a hollow in the thickest part of the forest, he sat down on the stump of an alder-tree, where he made and twice repeated a low signal whistle, which was soon answered by another Indian, who approached in an opposite direction, and in whom, to his great surprise, Wingenund recognised Mahéga. He was not near enough to overhear their conversation, neither was he aware whether they spoke in the Delaware tongue, but after conversing in a low tone for some minutes, they separated, and Wingenund again put himself on the trail of the stranger; the latter frequently stopped in his course, looked round and listened, but the youth was too practised and sagacious to be baffled by these precautions, and finally succeeded in tracking the object of his pursuit to an encampment containing ten or a dozen armed Indians, whom he knew at once to form a war-party, but could not decide to what tribe they belonged; he succeeded, however, in securing a mocassin which one of them had dropped, and returned unperceived to the Delaware village.

Such was the outline of the occurrences now rapidly sketched by War-Eagle; and in concluding his narrative, he held up the mocassin above-men-

tioned, and presented it to the aged chief. The latter examined it for a moment in silence, and restoring it to the warrior, pronounced, in a low guttural tone, the word "Dah-cotah."

"Yes," said the War-Eagle, in a deep whisper, indicative of the indignant passion that boiled within; "Yes, the Dahcotah is in the woods; he prowls like a prairie-wolf. The Great Spirit has made him a dog, and if he sets his foot on the hunting ground of the Lenape, let not his wife complain if she looks along his path in vain, and strikes her breast, saying, 'The wife of the Dahcotah is a widow!' but the Evil Spirit has crept into the heart of the Washashee, a snake is in the council-chamber of the Lenape, and lies are on the tongue of Mahéga! Is it enough, or must War-Eagle speak more?"

"The words of my son are hard," replied Tamenund, shaking his head sorrowfully; "the Dahcotah are dogs, they are on a deer-hunt; their heart is not big enough to make them dig up the hatchet to fight with the Lenape. Tamenund cannot believe that the tongue of Mahéga is so forked, or his heart so black, for two suns have not passed since he sat and smoked in this lodge, and spoke of Olitipa, the daughter of the Prairie. He said that her voice was music to him, that her form was in his dreams, and he asked Tamenund to give her to him as a wife."

At these words the suppressed rage of the youthful warrior had well nigh burst the iron bands of Indian self-control ; he ground his teeth audibly together, his dilated form trembled through every nerve and muscle, but observing the keen eye of the Missionary fixed upon his countenance, he subdued in a moment the rising tempest, and asked in a voice, the forced calmness of which was fearful, " What said my father ? "

Tamenund replied that the maiden was Great Medicine in the tribe, that she was a gift of the Great Spirit, and that her dwelling could never be in the lodge of an Osage chief. " He went away without speaking," added the old man seriously ; " but his eye spoke bad words enough ! "

" My father said well," exclaimed the impetuous young man ; " let Mahéga seek a wife among his dog-brothers the Dahcotahs ! War-eagle will smoke no more in his lodge."

After a brief pause, Tamenund continued :

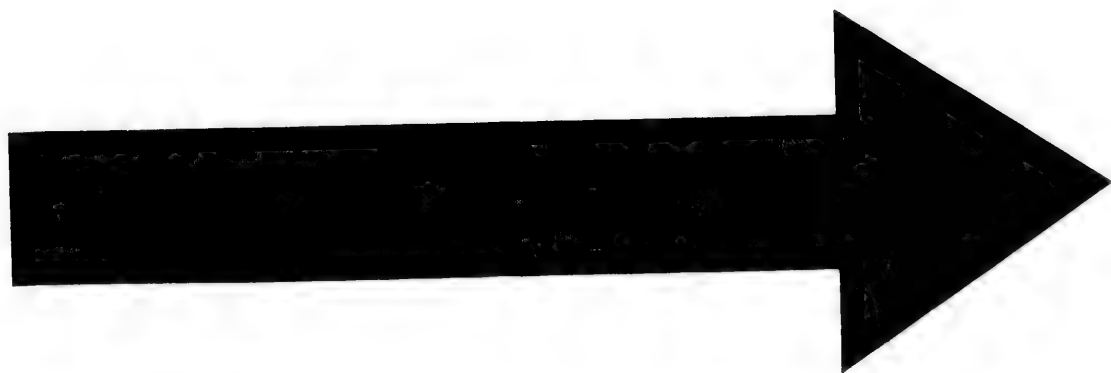
" My son has told half his thoughts, let him speak on."

" Nay," returned the young warrior, " let my father consult the Medicine, and the counsellors who have seen many winters : War-Eagle will whisper to his Braves, and when the ancient men in council have spoken, he will be ready."

With this ambiguous answer, he folded his buffalo robe over his shoulder and left the lodge.

The Missionary saw that mischief was brewing, yet knew not how to prevent it. He had gained extraordinary influence among the Delawares by never interfering in their councils, unless when he felt assured that the result would justify the advice which he offered, but on the present occasion it was evident that his Indian friends had sufficient grounds for suspecting their Osage allies of treachery; he resolved, therefore, to wait and observe, before making those attempts at reconciliation which became his character and his mission. Influenced by this determination, he spoke a few words to the aged chief on indifferent matters, and shortly afterwards retired to his own lodge.

During the preceding conversation Baptiste had been seated at a little distance, his whole attention apparently engaged in mending a rent in his mocassins, but scarcely a word had escaped his watchful ear, and while he heard with secret delight that there was every chance of a fight with the Sioux, towards whom he cherished, as we have before observed, an unextinguished hatred, he could not view without much uneasiness the dangerous position in which Reginald's party might be placed by a rupture between the Delawares and Osages, in a wild region where either party might so soon obtain the ready aid of the Pawnees, or some other warlike and marauding



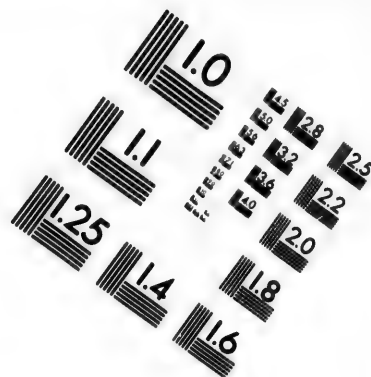
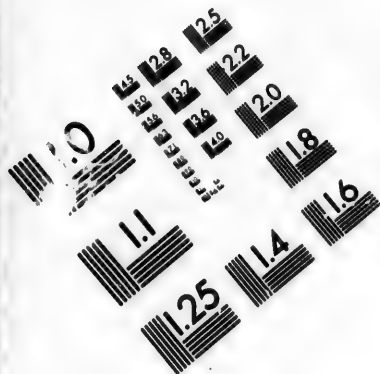
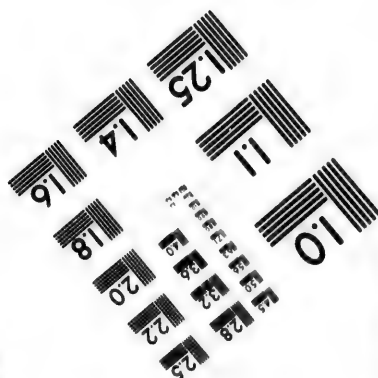
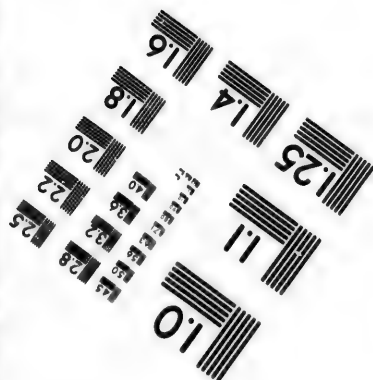
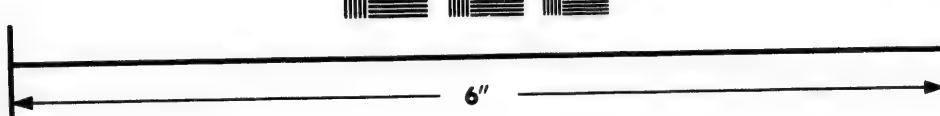
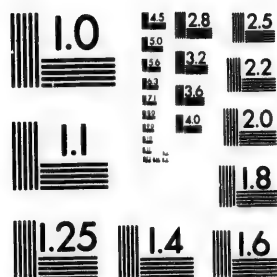


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tribe; he resolved, however, for the present to content himself with putting his young leader on his guard, reserving a fuller explanation until he should have been able to ascertain the intentions of his Delaware friends: in this last endeavour he did not anticipate much difficulty, for the experienced woodsman had proved his steadiness to them in many a fray, and his courage and skill were no less proverbial among them than was his mortal enmity to the Dahcotahs.

Nothing occurred during the ensuing night to disturb the quiet of the encampment, if that may be denominated quiet which was constantly interrupted by the chattering of wakeful squaws, the barking of dogs, the occasional chaunt of a warrior, and the distant howling of hungry wolves; our hero's dreams were, like his waking thoughts, full only of Prairie-bird; and when he rose at day-break he expressed no wish to roam or hunt, but lingered within view of that small circular lodge, which contained the treasure that he valued most on earth. To the cautious warning of Baptiste he answered, smiling, "You confess yourself that you only suspect; you know our friends and their language, their wiles, and their stratagems. I trust the safety of my party to your sagacity; if your suspicions are turned to certainty, tell me, and I am ready to act."

As the young man left the lodge without even

taking his cutlass or his rifle, Baptiste looking after him, shrugged his shoulders, adding in an under tone, just loud enough to be heard by Monsieur Perrot, who sat at his side,

"Suspicion," "certainty," "sagacity" — why surely he is mad ! he talks as if plots and plans were measured out by rule amongst the Red-skins, as they may be 'mongst lords and princes in Europe ! this comes of his towering, as they call it, amongst the Dutch and other outlandish tribes. Surely he's lived enough in the territory to know that with these Ingians, and special near a Sioux trail, the first suspicion a man is like to get is an arrow in his ribs or a tomahawk in his brain. Capote-bleu, Maître Perrot, what do you think of your master, is he mad ?"

"Very much mad," said the good-humoured valet, grinning, whilst he continued assiduously to pound some coffee-beans which he was preparing for breakfast ; "very much mad, Monsieur Baptiste ; he very mad to leave Paris to go to his fox-huntin' uncle in England ; he more mad to leave dat for the back-woods by de Muskingum ; but he dam mad to leave Mooshanne to come here where dere is nothing but naked savages and naked prairies."

"Ah ! Maître Perrot," replied the guide, "my father was a Canada Frenchman, and although he was, mayhap, never further east than Montreal, he

was as fond of talking of Paris as a bear is of climbing a bee-tree !”*

“He very right, Monsieur Ba’tiste; de world without Paris is no more dan a woman widout a tongue ; but as you know our language, I will speak it to you, for pronouncing English is no better dan breaking stones wid your teeth !” And the merry valet forthwith inflicted upon his graver companion a Parisian tirade, that very soon went beyond the latter’s stock of Canadian French.

The morning dawned with unusual splendour, the sun gradually rose over the wooded hills that bounded the eastern horizon, and the light breeze shook the dewdrops from the flowers, as Prairie-bird, fresh and lovely as the scene around her, tripped lightly over the grass to the sequestered spot which we have before mentioned as being her favourite resort ; there, seated at the root of the aged tree where Reginald had first seen her, she opened the volume which was her constant companion, and poured forth the grateful feelings of her heart, in the words of the inspired Prophet-

* An allusion to the fondness of bears for honey occurs more than once in this tale, and will be met with in some shape or other in most works which treat of that animal’s habits and propensities: that such is the case in Europe as well as in North America, may be gathered from the fact that in the Russian tongue, a Bear is called, “Med-vede,” which word is thus formed: *med*, honey, *vede*, who knows: “He who knows honey.”

King ; at her feet flowed the brawling stream which fed the valley below the encampment ; the merry birds sang their matins among the leafy branches above her head, and around her sprang sweet-scented flowers and blossoms of a thousand varied hues. There are some spots, and some brief seasons on earth, so redolent of freshness, beauty, and repose, as almost to revive the Paradise lost by our first parents, but soon, too soon, the effects of primeval sin and its punishment are felt, and the atmosphere of heavenly peace is tainted by the miasma of human passion !

Prairie-bird had enjoyed for some time her study and her meditations undisturbed, when her attention was caught by the sound of approaching footsteps ; the conscious blood rushed to her cheek as she expected to see the same visitor who had so suddenly presented himself on the preceding day, when to her surprise and annoyance, the gigantic figure of Mahéga stood before her on the opposite side of the streamlet by which she was seated ; although simple, unsuspecting, and fearless by nature, there was something in the countenance and bearing of this formidable chief that had always inspired her with mingled dislike and awe ; remembering on the present occasion the hint lately given to her by the Missionary, she returned the haughty greeting of the Indian by a gentle inclination of her head, and then summoned composure enough

to continue her reading, as if desirous to avoid conversation; such, however, was not Mahéga's intention, who softening, as far as he was able, the rough tones of his voice, addressed to her, in the Delaware tongue, a string of the finest Indian compliments on her beauty and attractions. To these the maiden coldly replied, by telling him that she thanked him for his good words, but that as she was studying the commands of the Great Spirit, she wished not to be disturbed.

Mahéga, nothing checked by this reply, continued to ply her with protestations and promises, and concluded by telling her that she *must* be his wife; that he was a warrior, and would fill her wigwam with spoils and trophies. As he proceeded, his countenance became more excited, and the tones of his voice had already more of threat than of entreaty. Prairie-bird replied with forced calmness, that she knew he was a great warrior, but that she could not be his wife; their paths were different; his led to war, and spoils, and power in ruling his tribe; hers to tending the sick and fulfilling the commands of the Great Spirit given in the Medicine Book." Irritated by the firm though gentle tone of her reply, the violent passion of the chief broke out in a torrent of harsh and menacing words; he called her a foundling and a slave; adding, that in spite of the Delaware squaws and their white

allies, she should sleep in his lodge, although the honor was greater than she deserved."

Fired with indignation at this brutal menace, the spirited girl rose from her seat, and looking him full in the face, replied, "Prairie-bird is a foundling; if Mahéga knows his parents, he disgraces their name; she would rather be the slave of Tamenund than the wife of Mahéga."

A demoniac grin stole over the features of the savage, as he replied: "The words of Olitipa are bitter. Mahéga laughs at her anger; she is alone and unprotected; will she walk to his lodge, or must the warrior carry her?"

So saying, he advanced to the very edge of the narrow stream! The maiden, although alarmed, retained sufficient presence of mind to know that to save herself by flight was impossible, but the courage of insulted virtue supported her, and she answered him in a tone that breathed more of indignation than of fear.

"Olitipa is not alone—is not unprotected! The Great Spirit is her protector, before whom the stature of Mahéga is as a blade of grass, and his strength like that of an infant. See," she continued, drawing from her girdle a small sharp-pointed dagger, "Olitipa is not unprotected, if Mahéga moves a foot to cross that stream this knife shall reach her heart; and the great Mahéga will go

to the hunting fields of the dead, a coward, and a woman-slayer."

As she spoke these words she held the dagger pointed to her bosom now heaving with high emotion; her form seemed to dilate, and her dark eye kindled with a prouder lustre. The glow on her cheek, and the lofty dignity of her attitude, only heightened her beauty in the eyes of the savage, and confirmed him in carrying out his fell purpose, to ensure the success of which he saw that stratagem, not force, must be employed; assuming, therefore, a sarcastic tone of voice, he replied,

"Olitipa trusts to the edge of her knife; Mahéga laughs at her." Then he continued in a louder key, as if addressing an Indian behind her, "Let Wânemi seize her arm and hold it."

As the surprised maiden turned her head in the direction where she expected to see the Indian to whom Mahéga was speaking, that crafty chief cleared the brook at a bound, and seizing her waist, while a smile of triumph lit up his features, said, "The pretty one is Mahéga's prisoner; there is no one here but himself; a cunning tale tickled the ears of Olitipa."

The hapless girl saw how she had been outwitted by the savage. She struggled in vain to free herself from his grasp and a faint scream of despair broke from her lips.

The spring of a famished tiger on a heifer is

not more fiercely impetuous than was the bound with which Reginald Brandon rushed from the adjacent thicket upon Mahéga,—reckless of his opponent's huge bulk and strength, forgetful that he was himself unarmed. The cry of Prairie-bird had strung with tenfold power every sinew in his athletic frame ; seizing with both hands the throat of Mahéga, he grasped it with such deadly force that the Indian was compelled to release his hold of the maiden,—but he still retained her knife, and in the struggle plunged it into the arm and shoulder of Reginald, who relaxed not, however, his iron grasp, but still bore his opponent backwards, until the foot of the latter tripped over a projecting root, and he fell with tremendous force upon his head, the blood gushing in torrents from his nose and mouth. Reginald, who had been dragged down in his fall, seized the dagger, and, as he raised it above his head, felt a light touch upon his arm, and turning round saw Prairie-bird kneeling at his side, her face pale as monumental marble, and the sacred volume still clasped in her hand.

“ Kill him not, Reginald,” she said, in a low impressive voice ; “ Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord !”

Breathless, and flushed with the late severe struggle, the young man replied, “ I will spare the villain, dear Prairie-bird, at your bidding ; he is

stunned and senseless now, but he will soon recover, and his fury and thirst for revenge will know no bounds ; he shall know, however, that I have spared him." So saying he cut off dyed and ornamented scalp lock from the top of Mahéga's head, and laying it beside the prostrate chieftain, arose, and retired with Prairie-bird from the spot.

They walked together some distance in silence, for her heart was overcharged with contending emotions, and as they went she unconsciously clung to his arm for support ; at length she stopped, and looking up in his face, her eyes glistening with tears, she said,

"How am I ever to thank you?—my first debt of gratitude is due to Heaven ; but you have been its brave, its blessed instrument of my deliverance from worse than death !" and a shudder passed over her frame as the rude grasp of Mahéga recurred to her remembrance.

"Dear Prairie-bird," he replied ; "as a man I would have done as much for the poorest and most indifferent of your sex — how then am I repaid a thousand, thousand fold by having been allowed to serve a being so precious !" The deep mellow tone in which he spoke these words, and the look by which they were accompanied, brought the truant colour again to the cheek of his companion, and as she cast her full dark eyes downwards, they rested on the arm that supported her,

and she saw that his sleeve was stained and dropping with blood !

" Oh ! you are wounded, badly hurt, I fear. Tell me, tell me, Reginald," she continued, with an intensity of anxiety that her expressive countenance betrayed, " are you badly hurt ?"

" Indeed, dear Prairie-bird, I cannot tell you ; I felt the Indian strike me twice with the dagger before he fell ; I do not think the wounds are serious, for you see I can walk and assist your steps too."

While he thus spoke he was, however, growing faint from loss of blood, and the wound in his shoulder, having become cold and stiff, gave him exquisite pain. Prairie-bird was not deceived by the cheerfulness of his manner ; she saw the paleness that was gradually stealing over his countenance, and with ready presence of mind, insisted on his sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree beside their path. The suffering condition of Reginald redoubled instead of paralyzing her energies ; she filled his cap with fresh water from the brook, urged him to taste a few drops, and sprinkled more over his face and temples ; then ripping up the sleeve of his hunting shirt, she found the blood still welling from two severe wounds between the elbow and shoulder in the left arm ; these she bathed and carefully closed, applying to them a healing salve which she drew from the small bag

that she wore at her girdle, after which she banded the arm firmly with her kerchief, then, kneeling beside him, strove to read in his face the success of her simple surgery.

In the course of a few minutes the dizzy sensation of faintness, that had been produced by loss of blood, passed away, and the delighted Prairie-bird, seeing on his countenance the beaming smile of returning consciousness and strength, murmured to herself, "Oh! God I thank thee!" then hiding her face in her hands, wept with mingled emotion and gratitude. Reginald heard the words, he marked the tears, and no longer able to suppress the feelings with which his heart overflowed, he drew her gently towards him with his yet unwounded arm, and whispered in her ear the outpourings of a first, fond, passionate love!

No reply came from her lips, her tears (tears of intense emotion) flowed yet faster; but a sensible pressure on the part of the little hand which he clasped within his own, gave him the blest assurance that his love was returned; and again and again did he repeat those sacred and impassioned vows by which the hopes, the fears, the fortunes, the affections, the very existence of two immortal beings, are inseparably blended together. Her unresisting hand remained clasped in his, and her head leaned upon his shoulder, that she might conceal the blushes that suffused her countenance;

still he would not be satisfied without a verbal answer to his thrice urged prayer that he might call her his own; and when at length she raised her beaming eyes to his, and audibly whispered "For ever," he sealed upon those sweet lips the contract of unchanged affection.

Bright, transitory moments of bliss! lightning flashes that illumine the dark and stormy path of life, though momentary in your duration how mighty in your power, how lasting in your effects! Sometimes imparting a rapturous glow and kindling an unceasing heat that death itself cannot extinguish, and sometimes under a star of evil destiny searing and withering the heart rendered desolate by your scorching flame!

It is not necessary to inform the gentle reader how long the *tête-à-tête* on the fallen tree continued; suffice it to say that Prairie-bird forgot her fright, and Reginald his wounds; and when they returned to the village, each sought to enjoy in solitude those delicious reveries which deserve certainly the second place in love's catalogue of happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

ETHELSTON PREPARES TO LEAVE MOOSHANNE. MAHEGA APPEARS AS AN ORATOR, IN WHICH CHARACTER HE SUCCEEDS BETTER THAN IN THAT OF A LOVER. A STORM SUCCEEDED BY A CALM.

WHILE the events described in the last chapters were in progress, the hours sped smoothly onward at Mooshanne, Lucy and Ethelston thought themselves justly entitled to a liberal compensation for the trials of their long separation, and, as the spring advanced, morning and evening generally found them strolling together, in the enjoyment of its opening beauties. Sometimes Aunt Mary encountered them during the busy round of her visits to the poultry, the piggery, or to the cottage of some neighbour, whither sorrow or sickness called her. The mate frequently came over from Marietta to see his captain, and to inquire whether there was no early prospect of another voyage, for he already began to find that Time travelled slowly ashore; and although he consoled himself, now and then, with a pipe and social glass in David Muir's back parlour, he longed to be afloat again, and told the worthy merchant, that he

would rather have made the fresh-water trip in the canoe, than be laid up in dock, while he felt his old hull still stout and seaworthy. His son Henry continued to advance in the good graces of Jessie Muir, but unfortunately for the youth his father had discovered his attachment, and lost no opportunity of bantering him in the presence of the young lady, accompanying his jokes with sundry grins, and severe pokes in the ribs, which caused sometimes a disagreeable alternation of vexation and confusion; nevertheless David Muir remained habitually blind to the state of his daughter's affections, and Dame Christie was a great deal too much occupied with the cares of domestic government (including the occasional lectures and reproofs administered to David), to admit of her troubling her head with, what she would have termed, their childish fancies.

Such was the general state of affairs on the banks of the Muskingum, when Colonel Brandon received letters from St. Louis, informing him that since the departure of his son, various disputes had arisen between the agents of the different companies, and that unless a speedy and amicable arrangement could be effected, a heavy loss must necessarily fall upon the fur-proprietors and others interested in the speculation. By the same post a letter bearing a foreign post-mark was placed in the hands of Ethelston, during the perusal of which, an expression of sadness spread

itself over his countenance, and he fell abstractedly into a reverie, the subject of which was evidently of a painful nature. Such indications were not likely to escape the anxious and observant eye of love, and Lucy, laying her hand lightly on his arm, said in a tone half joking, half serious, "Am I not entitled to know all your secrets now, Edward?"

"I think not," he replied in the same tone, "and I am rather disposed to refuse gratifying your curiosity, until you consent to acquiring such a title as shall be indisputable." Lucy coloured, but as she still held out her hand and threatened him with her displeasure, if he continued disobedient, he gave her the letter, saying "I suppose I must submit; the contents are sad, but there is no reason why I should withhold them from yourself, or from your father."—With these words he left the room; after a short pause, Lucy, at the Colonel's request, read him the letter, which proved to be from young Lient. L'Estrange, and which, being translated, ran as follows:—

"MY HONORED FRIEND,

I NEED not tell you of the grief that I experienced on revisiting my changed and desolate home. My Father has told me all that passed during your stay in the Island. He looks upon those days not in anger, but in sorrow; he is sensible that for a time he did you injustice, and fears, that in the first bitterness of his grief, he

may have omitted to make you full reparation. These feelings he entreats me to convey to you, and desires me to add, that from the first day of your arrival to that of your final departure, your conduct was like yourself,—noble, upright and generous. The misfortune that we still bewail, we bow to, as being the infliction of a Providence whose ways are inscrutable.—Accept the renewed assurance of the highest regard and esteem of your friend

EUGENE L'ESTRANGE."

As Lucy read this letter, her eyes filled with tears, though, perhaps she could scarcely have explained, whether she wept over the afflictions that had befallen the L'Estrange family, or the generous testimony which it bore to her lover's conduct. The Colonel, too, was much affected, and gladly acquiesced in his daughter's proposal, that they should, for the future, abstain from renewing a subject which must cause such painful recollections to Ethelston.

Ere many hours had elapsed, the latter was summoned to attend the Colonel, who informed him that the intelligence lately received from St. Louis, was of a nature so important to his affairs, that it required immediate attention. "There is no one," he continued, "to whom I can well entrust this investigation except yourself, for none has deserved or received so much of my confi-

dence." There was an unusual embarrassment and hesitation observable in Ethelston's countenance, on hearing these words, which did not escape his guardian's quick eye, and the latter added, "I see, my dear fellow, that you are not disposed to leave Mooshanne again so soon, you are thinking about certain promises, and a certain young lady,—is it not so Edward?"

"It is so, indeed, my best and kindest of friends," said Ethelston. "Can you think or wish that it should be otherwise?"

"Nay," said Colonel Brandon, smiling, "I will not deny that you are entitled to entertain such thoughts, but believe me, when I assure you seriously that this expedition is essential to your own interests and to mine. A great portion of the property left to you under my care by your father, is invested in these Fur companies; and ere you enter on the responsibilities of a married life, it is necessary that you put your affairs in such a posture, as to ensure some future provision for the lady of whom you are thinking. These arrangements will not detain you at St. Louis for more than six weeks or two months, by that time Reginald will have returned from his Indian excursion; you will come home together, and I will then listen patiently to whatever you may think fit to say, regarding the young lady in question;—shall it be so, Edward?"

"How can I be grateful enough!" replied Ethel-

ston, taking the Colonel's hand; "give me only leave to explain to Lucy, the cause and probable duration of my absence, then I am ready to receive your instructions and to set about it immediately."

We will not inquire too minutely how Lucy received this explanation from her lover's lip, nor what means he took to reconcile her to the proposed arrangement; it is sufficient to state, that she finally acquiesced with her habitual gentleness, and that, in a few days after the above conversation, Ethelston had completed his preparations for his journey to St. Louis.

We will again take leave of him and of Mooshanne for a season, and return to Mahéga, whom we left bleeding and senseless, at no great distance from the Osage and Delaware encampment. Indeed, we should, ere this, have accused ourselves of inhumanity towards that chief, for leaving him so long in such sorry plight, had he not merited severe punishment, for his rough and brutal behaviour to "Prairie-bird."

When Mahéga recovered his senses, he was still so much confused from the stunning effects of the severe blow that he had received on the head, as well as from loss of blood, that he could not recal to mind the events immediately preceding his swoon; nor did they present themselves distinctly to his memory, until his eye rested upon his stained scalp lock, and beside it the knife that

Reginald Brandon had driven firmly into the turf. Then he remembered clearly enough the struggle, his fall, and the maiden's escape; and the rage engendered by this remembrance was rendered yet more violent, when he reflected on the insult that his scalp had sustained from an enemy who had scorned to take his life.

Fierce, as were the passions that boiled within the breast of the Osage, his self-command was such that he was able to control all outward demonstration of them; and, rising slowly, he first effaced in the stream all the sanguinary marks of the late contest, and then took his way toward the camp, revolving in his mind various projects for securing the two principal objects that he was determined to accomplish,—the possession of Prairie-bird, and the death of Reginald Brandon!

Although a wild uninstructed savage, Mahéga was gifted with talents of no common order. Bold, and inflexible in carrying out his purposes, he had cunning sufficient to make unimportant concessions to the opinions of other chiefs and braves in council: unlike the great majority of his tribe and race, he was well aware of the power and strength resulting from union, and although all his ambition ultimately centred in himself, he had the art of persuading his countrymen that he sought only their interests and welfare; thus, while many hated and more feared Mahéga, he

was the most influential chief in the tribe, on account of his daring courage, his success in war, and the reckless liberality with which he distributed among others his share of booty, or of spoil. When the Delaware band had migrated to the banks of the Osage river, Mahéga's first impulse had been to attack and destroy them, but finding that the new comers were better supplied with arms and ammunition, the issue of a conflict seemed doubtful. Moreover, as they were visited by many traders, he calculated that, by keeping on friendly terms with them, he should acquire for his tribe and for himself, many advantages greater than they had before enjoyed.

Acting upon these motives he had not only encouraged peace with the Delawares, but had effected through his own influence the league that had for some time united the two bands in our encampment; nor had he been mistaken in his expectations, for since their union with the band of Delawares, the Osages had been enabled to beat off the Pawnees and other roving tribes, from whose inroads upon their hunting-ground they had before been exposed to frequent and severe disasters; the objects which he had contemplated, had thus been for the most part accomplished. The tribe was plentifully supplied with arms and ammunition by the traders; his own influence amongst them was higher than ever; but he could not brook a rival to

his fame as a warrior in War-Eagle, nor bear to be checked and thwarted in his ambitious schemes, by the mild authority of Tamenund.

The mind of Mahéga being thus prepared for seizing the earliest opportunity of coming to a rupture with the Delawares, it may well be imagined how his most violent and rancorous passions were excited by the scornful rejection of his suit on the part of Prairie-bird, and the disgrace he had incurred in his rencounter with her white protector. He resolved no longer to delay the meditated blow; he had already made a secret league with the warlike and powerful Dahcotahs; and the occasion seemed most favourable for wreaking his vengeance on the relatives of Prairie-bird, and the white men now resident in the Delaware camp.

Having once formed his determination, he set about carrying it into effect with the sagacity and profound dissimulation which had already obtained for him such an ascendancy in the Osage council. No sooner had he reached his lodge, than he dressed himself in his Medicine robe,* adorned

* The Buffalo robes worn by the Osages, as well as by some other Missouri tribes, are variously ornamented and painted with devices. Some of these refer to war, some to marriage, some to medicine or mystery; these last are generally worn at councils, on which occasions a chief who has some important subject to propose, frequently adds to the paint on his face, some streaks corresponding to the devices on his Buffalo robe.

his face with corresponding streaks of paint, and concealing the loss of his scalplock by a Spanish kerchief which he folded round his head, somewhat after the fashion of a turban, he sallied forth to visit the chiefs and braves, on whose co-operation he felt that success must mainly depend.

Some of these were already prepared to adopt his views, by their previous participation in the league with the Dahcotahs; others he bent and moulded to his purpose by arguments, and inducements suited to their character or circumstances; and ere he returned to his lodge, he felt confident that his proposed plans would be supported by the most influential warriors in the tribe, and that he should easily bear down the opposition of the more cautious and scrupulous, who might be disposed to keep faith with their Delaware allies.

In the meanwhile War-Eagle was not idle, he visited the principal braves and warriors of his tribe, and found them unanimous in their resolution to break off all communication with the Osages, as soon as the latter should commit any overt act that should justify them in dissolving the league into which they had entered. He also resolved to watch closely the movements of Mahéga, of whose malice and influence he was fully aware; with this view he selected an intelligent Delaware boy, who knew the Osage language, and desired

him to hover about the tent of the chief, and to bring a report of all that he should see or hear.

Towards the close of day, Mahéga sent runners about his village, after the usual Indian fashion, to summon the warriors and braves, most of whom were already prepared for the harangue which he was about to address to them; as soon as a sufficient number were collected, the wily chief came forth from his lodge, in the dress before described, and began by thanking them for so readily obeying his call.

“Why did Mahéga call together the warriors?” he continued; “was it to tell them that a broad bison-trail is near the camp? The Medicine-men have not yet smoked the hunting pipe to the Wahcondah.—Was it to tell them of the scalps taken by their fathers? The young men have not been called to the war-dance, their ears have not heard the Drum.*—Was it to tickle their ears with words like dried grass? Mahéga’s tongue is not spread with honey; he has called the Was-hashe to open their ears and eyes, to tell them

* In the performance of the war-dance among the Indians of the Missouri, the tread of the dancers is guided by a monotonous chaunt, sung by some of the Medicine-men, and accompanied by the beat of a small drum of the rudest construction, and most barren dismal tone. It is generally nothing more than a dried skin, stretched upon a wooden frame hollowed out with a knife by the squaws.

that snakes have crept under their lodges, that the dogs in the village have become wolves ! ”

As he paused, the auditors looked each at the other ; those who were not yet instructed in the speaker's project being at a loss to catch the meaning of his words. Seeing that he had arrested their attention, he proceeded, “ When Mahéga was young, when our fathers were warriors, who was so strong as the Washashe ? Our hunters killed the deer and the bison from the Neska to the Topeo-kà.* The Konzas were our brothers, and we were afraid of none. But the Mahe-hunguh † came near, their tongues were smooth, their hands were full, and the Washashe listened to their talk ;—is it not so ? ”

A deep murmur testified the attention of his auditors ; but Mahéga knew that he was venturing on dangerous ground, and his present object was rather to incite them to vengeance against the band of Delawares and their guests, than against the white-men in general. He resumed his harangue in a milder tone.

“ The Long-knives smoked the pipe of peace with us, we gave them meat, and skins, and they gave us paint, and blankets, and fire-weapons with Medicine-powder and lead,—all that was well ; but

* The Indian names for the rivers now called “ Kanzas ” and “ Osage,” both of which fall into the Missouri.

† *Anglicé*, Long-knives, or Americans.

who came with the Long-knives,—the Lenapé!" He paused a moment, then looking fiercely round, he continued in a louder strain; "and who are these Lenapé? They were beggars when they came to us! Their skin is red, but their hearts are pale. Do we not know the tale of their fathers? Were they not slaves to the warriors of other nations? * Were they not women? Did they not leave the war-path to plant maize, and drink the fire-water of the Long-knives? They gave up their hunting ground; they left the bones of their fathers; they crossed the Ne-o-hunge,† and asked for the friendship of the Washashe. We lighted the pipe for them; we received them like brothers, and opened to them our hunting ground; but their hearts are bad to us, Washashes, Mahéga tells you that the Lenapé are snakes!"

Another deep guttural sound, indicative of increased excitement gratified the speaker's ear, and

* Mahéga here alludes to that unfortunate era, in the history of the Lenapé, so pathetically described by Heckewalder, when they permitted themselves to be persuaded by the whites to abandon all their warlike weapons and pursuits, and following those of agriculture, to leave the affairs of war entirely to the northern tribes, who guaranteed their safety. The consequence was such as might have been expected, they were treated with contumely and injustice; and being compelled, at length, to resume those arms to which they had been for some time unaccustomed, they suffered repeated defeats and disasters from the "six nations," and adjoining tribes.

† The Mississippi is so called by the Osages.

he continued in a strain yet bolder. "Is Mahéga not a chief? Has he not struck the bodies of his enemies? Are there no scalps on his war-shirt? He was good to these Lenapé, he treated their warriors like brothers, he offered to make Olitipa his wife, they gave him bitter words and threw dirt upon his lodge. Shall the Washashe Chief be called a Dog?" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "Shall he sit on the ground while a Lenapé spits in his face?"

A shout of anger and fury burst from the audience, as waving his hand impatiently for silence, he went on, "The Lenapé knew that their hearts were false, their arms weak, their tongues forked, and they have brought in a band of Long-knives to defend them and to drive the Washashe from their hunting grounds. Shall it be so. Shall we hold our backs to be scourged like children. Shall we whine like starved wolves! See how the pale-faces can insult your chief." As he spoke Mahéga tore the turban with one hand from his head, and holding up his severed scalp lock with the other, while every muscle of his countenance worked with fury, "See what the hand of a white-face boy has done. Mahéga slept under a tree, and he whom they call Netis, the stranger who has eaten our meat and smoked with our chiefs, stole upon Mahéga, struck him on the head, and cut off his hair." As he uttered this audacious falsehood,

which was, of course, believed by all who heard him, a terrific shout burst from the assembled Osages, and the wily chief striking while the iron was hot, went on,

“ It is enough—the Washashes are not women ; they will dig up the hatchet, and throw it into the council-lodge of these white-faced and pale-hearted dogs. The great chief of the Dahcotahs has spoken to Mahéga ; he seeks the friendship of the Washashes ; the Dahcotahs are men ; the bisons on their hunting grounds are like the leaves in the forest. They wish to call the Washashes brothers, they wait for Mahéga’s words.—What shall he say ? ”

A tremendous shout was raised in reply, a shout that could be heard throughout the whole encampment. Mahéga saw that his triumph was complete, and folding his Medicine robe over his shoulder, he once more waved his hand for silence, and dismissed the assembly saying, “ Before the sun sinks again the chiefs and braves will meet in council. The Washashes will hear their words and they will be ready.” As he spoke he cast his dark eye expressively downwards to the tomahawk suspended at his belt, and slowly re-entered his lodge.

Meanwhile the youth who had been sent by War-Eagle to observe what was passing in the Osage encampment, executed his commission with fidelity and address. Although not sufficiently

familiar with the language to catch all that fell from Mahéga he yet learnt enough to satisfy his young chief that a rupture was at hand. It only remained now to be proved whether it would take place as the result of an open council, or whether the Osages would withdraw secretly to their new Dahcotah allies.

On the morning succeeding the events above related, War Eagle left the encampment before daybreak, partly to see whether he could discover any unusual stir among the Osages, and partly to revolve in his mind the course of conduct that he should suggest if called upon to give his opinion before the Lenape council. Many various emotions were struggling in his bosom, and in this respect the descendants of Adam, whether their skins be white or red, so far resemble each other, that on such occasions they seek to avoid the turmoil of their fellow-men, and to be for a season alone amid the works of inanimate nature.

It was with impressions and feelings far different that Reginald and Prairie-bird found themselves soon after sunrise together, as if by tacit appointment by the great tree, under which he had first seen her. In order to guard against the treachery of which he believed Mahéga capable, he had communicated to Baptiste the events of the preceding morning, and had desired him to watch

the movements of the latter, especially guarding Prairie-bird against any renewal of his violence.— The trusty forester, who had grown extremely taciturn since he had observed his young master's attachment, shrugged his shoulders, and briefly promised to obey his instructions. He was too shrewd to oppose a torrent such as that by which Reginald was carried away ; and, although it must be confessed, that he had many misgivings as to the reception that the tidings would meet with at the hands of Colonel Brandon, the beauty and gentleness of Prairie-bird had so far won upon his rough nature that he was well disposed to protect her from the machinations of the Osage. With these intentions he followed her when she left her lodge, and as soon as she entered the thicket before described, he ensconced himself in a shady corner whence he could observe the approach of any party from the encampment.

We will now follow the steps of War-Eagle, who, having satisfied himself by a careful observation of the out piquette that no immediate movement was on foot among the Osages, turned towards the undulating prairies to the westward of the village.

He was in an uneasy and excited mood, both from the treachery of the Osages towards his tribe, and various occurrences which had of late

wounded his feelings in the quarter where they were most sensitive.

The victory over self, is the greatest that can be achieved by man, it assumes, however, a different complexion in those who are guided by the light of nature, and in those who have been taught by revelation. In the heathen it is confined to the actions and to the outward man, whereas in the Christian it extends to the motives and feelings of the heart. The former may spare an enemy, the latter must learn to forgive and love him. But in both cases the struggle is severe in proportion to the strength of the passion which is to be combated. In War-Eagle were combined many of the noblest features of the Indian character; but his passions had all the fierce intensity common to his race, and although the instructions of Paul Müller, falling like good seed on a wild but fertile soil, had humanized and improved him; his views of Christianity were incipient and indistinct, while the courage, pride, and feelings of his race were in the full zenith of their power. He had long known that Prairie-bird was not his sister in blood, she had grown up from childhood under his eye, and unconsciously perhaps at first, he had loved her, and still loved her with all the impassioned fervour of his nature. It may be remembered in the earlier portion of this tale, when he first became acquainted with Reginald, that he had

abstained from all mention of her name, and had avoided the subject whenever young Wing-nund brought it forward. He had never yet asked Olitipa to become his wife, but the sweet gentleness of her manner, and her open contempt for the addresses of the handsome and distinguished Osage, had led him to form expectations favourable to his own suit. At the same time there was something in the maiden's behaviour that had frequently caused him to doubt whether she loved him, and sharing in the awe with which she inspired all the Indians around her, he had hitherto hesitated and feared to make a distinct avowal. Of late he had been so much occupied in observing the suspicious movements of the Osages that his attention had been somewhat withdrawn from Olitipa: he was aware of her having become acquainted with Reginald, and the adventure of the preceding day, which had been communicated to him, filled him with an uneasiness that he could not conceal from himself, although he had succeeded in concealing it from others.

In this frame of mind, he was returning to the camp, along the course of the streamlet passing through the grove where the rencounter of the preceding day had occurred. When he reached the opening before described, his eyes rested on a sight that transfixed him to the spot. Seated

on one of the projecting roots of the ancient tree was Prairie-bird, her eye and cheek glowing with happiness, and her ear drinking in the whispered vows of her newly betrothed lover; her hand was clasped in his, and more than once he pressed it tenderly to his lips. For several minutes, the Indian stood silent and motionless as a statue; despair seemed to have checked the current of his blood, but by slow degrees consciousness returned; he saw her, the maiden whom he had served and loved for weary months and years, now interchanging with another tokens of affection not to be mistaken, and that other a stranger whom he had himself lately brought by his own invitation from a distant region.

The demon of jealousy took instant possession of his soul; every other thought, feeling, and passion, was for the time annihilated, the nobler impulses of his nature were forgotten, and he was, in a moment, transformed to a merciless savage, bent on swift and deadly vengeance. He only paused as in doubt, *how* he should kill his rival; perhaps, whether he should kill them both; his eye dwelt upon them with a stern ferocity, as he loosened the unerring tomahawk from his belt; another moment he paused, for his hand trembled convulsively, and a cold sweat stood like dew upon his brow. At this terrible crisis of his passion,

a low voice whispered in his ear, in the Delaware tongue,

"Would the Lenape chief stain his Medicine with a brother's blood?" War-Eagle, turning round, encountered the steady eye of Baptiste; he gave no answer, but directed his fiery glance towards the spot where the unconscious lovers were seated, and the half-raised weapon still vibrated under the impulse of the internal struggle that shook every muscle of the Indian's frame. Profiting by the momentary pause, Baptiste continued, in the same tone, "Shall the tomahawk of the War-Eagle strike an adopted son of the Unami?* The Bad Spirit has entered my brother's heart; let him hold a talk with himself, and remember that he is the son of Tamenund."

By an effort of self-control, such as none but an Indian can exercise, War-Eagle subdued, instantaneously, all outward indication of the tempest that had been aroused in his breast. Replacing the tomahawk in his belt, he drew himself proudly to his full height, and, fixing on the

* After their first meeting, in which Reginald had saved the life of War-Eagle, the latter had adopted his new friend, not only as a brother, but as a member of that portion of his tribe who were called Unami, and of which the turtle was the Medicine, or sacred symbol; after the ratification of such a covenant of brotherhood, each party is, according to Indian custom, solemnly bound to defend the other, on all occasions, at the risk of his own life

woodsman an eye calm and steady as his own, he replied,

"Grande-Hâche speaks truth; War-Eagle is a chief; the angry Spirit is strong; but he tramples it under his feet." He then added, in a lower tone, "War-Eagle will speak to Netis; not now; if his white brother's tongue has been forked, the Medicine of the Unami shall not protect him. The sky is very black, and War-Eagle has no friend left." So saying, the Indian threw his light blanket over his shoulder and stalked gloomily from the spot.

Baptiste followed with his eye the retreating figure of the Delaware, until it was lost in the dense foliage of the wood.

"He is a noble fellow," said the rough hunter, half aloud, leaning on his long rifle, and pursuing the thread of his own reflections. "He is one of the old sort of Ingians, and there's but few of 'em left. I've been with him in several skirmishes, and I've seen him strike and scalp more than one Dahcotah; but I never saw the glare of his eye so wild and blood-thirsty before; if he had kept his purpose, my old sinews would have had some trouble to save Master Reginald from that tomahawk. It's well for him that I've lived long enough among the Delawares to know the ins and outs of their natur', as well as John Skellup at the ferry knows the sand-bars and

channels in Bearcreek Shallows. I thought the Unami Medicine whispered in his ear might do something ; but I scarcely hoped it could smother such a fire in a minute. I remember, when I was young, I was in a hot passion, now and then, myself. *Capote !* I'm sometimes in a passion still, when I think of those cut-throat Sioux, and if my bristles are up, it takes some time to smooth 'em down." Here the woodsman's hand unconsciously rested for a moment on the huge axe suspended at his belt ; but his musings took another course, as he continued his muttered soliloquy.

"Well, I sometimes think the bears and the deer have more reason than human critturs, ay, and I believe that shot isn't overwide o' the mark. Look at them two youngsters, Master Reginald and War-Eagle, two brave, honest hearts as ever lived ; one saves the other's life ; they become brothers and swear friendship ; of a sudden, I am obliged to step in between 'em, to prevent one from braining the other with a tomahawk. And what's the cause of all this hate and fury ? Why, love,—a pair of black eyes and red lips ;—a strange kind of love, indeed, that makes a man hate and kill his best friend ; thank Heaven, I have nothing to do with such love ; and I say, as I said before, that the dumb animals have more reason than human critturs. Well, I must do all I can to make 'em friends again,

for a blind man might see they 'll need each other's help, ere many days are past !”

So saying, the woodsman threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and moved towards Reginald Brandon, who, unconscious of the danger that he had so narrowly escaped, was still engaged with Prairie-bird in that lovin' dialogue which finds no satiety in endless reiteration.

Baptiste drew near, and after the usual greetings, took an opportunity, as he thought unobserved by Prairie-bird, of making a sign to Reginald that he wished to speak with him in private ; but the maiden, watchful of every moment directly or indirectly affecting her lover, and already aware of the intrigues and treachery of the Osages, said to him with her usual simplicity of manner : “ Baptiste, if you have aught to say requiring my absence, I will go ; but as there are dangers approaching that threaten us all alike, do not fear to speak before me.—I know something of these people, and though only an unskilled maiden, my thoughts might be of some avail.”

The sturdy hunter, although possessed of a shrewd judgment, was somewhat confused by this direct appeal ; but after smoothing down the hair of his fur cap for a few moments, as was his custom when engaged in reflection, he resolved to speak before her without concealment ; and he

proceeded accordingly, with the blunt honesty of his nature, to narrate to them all the particulars of his late interview with War-Eagle. During his recital, both the auditors changed colour more than once, with different yet sympathetic emotions ; and when he concluded, Reginald suddenly arose, and, fixing his eye upon the maiden's countenance, as if he would read her soul, he said,

“Prairie-bird, I conjure you by all you love on earth, and by all your hopes of Heaven ! tell me truly, if you have known and encouraged these feelings in War-Eagle ?”

The dark eyes that had been cast to the ground with various painful emotions, were raised at this appeal, and met her lover's searching look with the modest courage of conscious truth as she replied,

“Reginald, is it possible that you can ask me such a question ? Olitipa, the foundling of the Delawares, loved War-Eagle as she loved Wingenund ; she was brought up in the same lodge with both ; she called both, brother ; she thought of them only as such ! Had War-Eagle ever asked for other love, she would have told him she had none other to give ! She knew of none other, until—until—” The presence of a third person checked the words that struggled for utterance ; her deep eyes filled with tears, and she hid them on Reginald's bosom.

"I were worse than an infidel, could I doubt thy purity and truth," he exclaimed with fervour; "Baptiste, I will speak with my Indian brother,—I pity him from my heart—I will strive all in my power to soothe his sorrow; for I, and I alone can know what *he* must suffer, who has, in secret and in vain, loved such a being as this! Let us return."

Slowly and sadly they wended their way to the encampment, the guide bringing up the rear. He was thoroughly convinced that Prairie-bird had spoken the truth: every look, every accent carried conviction with it; but he feared for the meeting between the young men, being fully aware of the impetuosity of Reginald's character, and of the intense excitement that now affected the Indian's mind. He determined, however, to leave them to themselves, for he had lived enough among men of stormy and ungoverned passions to know, that in a *tête-à-tête* between two high and generous spirits a concession will often be made, to which pride might, in the presence of others, never have submitted.

On reaching their quarters in the encampment, they found Paul Müller standing thoughtfully before Prairie-bird's tent, into which, after exchanging a brief but cordial greeting, he and the maiden withdrew, leaving Reginald and the guide to retire into the adjoining lodge of Tame-nund.

War-Eagle, who had posted himself in a spot whence, without being seen himself, he could observe their movements, now walked slowly forward to the entrance of the tent, into which he was immediately invited by the Missionary; his manner was grave and composed, nor could the most observant eye have traced in the lines of his countenance, the slightest shade of excitement or agitation.

After the usual salutation, he said, "War-Eagle will speak to the Black-Father presently; he has now low words for the ear of Olitipa."

Paul Müller, looking on him with a smile, benevolent though somewhat melancholy, said, "I shut my ears, my son, and go, for I know that War-Eagle will speak nothing that his sister should not hear;" and, so saying, he retired into his adjacent compartment of the tent. Prairie-bird, conscious of the painful scene that awaited her, sat in embarrassed silence, and for upwards of a minute War-Eagle contemplated without speaking the sad but lovely expression of the maiden's countenance; that long and piercing look told him all that he dreaded to know; he saw that Baptiste had spoken to her; he saw that his hopes were blasted; and still his riveted gaze was fixed upon her, as the eyes of one banished for life dwell upon the last receding tints of the home that he is leaving for ever. Collecting, at

length, all the stoic firmness of his nature, he spoke to her in the Delaware tongue; the words that he used were few and simple, but in them, and in the tone of his voice, there was so much delicacy mingled with such depth of feeling, that Prairie-bird could not refrain from tears.

Answering him in the same language, she blended her accustomed sincerity of expression with gentle words of soothing kindness; and, in concluding her reply, she took his hand in hers, saying, "Olitipa has long loved her brothers, War-Eagle and Wingenund, let not a cloud come between them now; her heart is not changed to the great warrior of Lenape; his sister trusts to his protection; she is proud of his fame; she has no other love to give him; her race, her religion, her heart forbid it! but he is her dear brother; he will not be angry, nor leave her.

"Mahéga and the Osages are become enemies; the Dahcotah trail is near; Tamenund is old and weak; where shall Olitipa find a brother's love, and a brother's aid, if War-Eagle turns away his face from her now?"

The noble heart to which she appealed had gone through its fiery ordeal of torture, and triumphed over it. After the manner of his tribe, the Delaware, before relinquishing her hand, pressed it for a moment to his chest, in token of affection, and said, "It is enough, my sister's words are good,

they are not spilt upon the ground ; let Mahéga or the Dahcotahs come near the lodge of Olitipa, and they shall learn that War-Eagle is her brother !" The chieftain's hand rested lightly on his tomahawk, and his countenance, as he withdrew from the tent, wore an expression of high and stern resolve.

How often in life is the observation forced upon us, that artlessness is the highest perfection of art ! It is an axiom, the truth of which remains unchallenged under whatever aspect we view it, and is indisputable even in its converse ; thus, as in writing, the apparent ease and simplicity of style is the result of frequent correction and laborious study ; so in corporeal exercises, the most assiduous practice must be combined with the highest physical qualifications, ere the dancer or the posture-master can emulate the unconscious grace displayed in the movements of a sportive kitten, or a playful child.

Had Prairie-bird been familiar with all the learned treatises on rhetoric that have appeared from the time of Aristotle to the present day, she could not have selected topics better calculated to move and soften the heart of her Indian brother. And yet she had no other instructor in the art than the natural delicacy of her sex and character. While the tribute to his warlike fame gratified his pride, the unstudied sisterly

affection of her tone and manner soothed his wounded feelings; and while her brief picture of her unprotected state aroused all his nobler and more generous sentiments, no breath of allusion to his successful rival's name kindled the embers of jealousy that slumbered beneath them.

As he walked from her tent, the young Indian's heart dilated within him; he trod the earth with a proud and lordly step; he had grappled with his passion; and though it had been rivetted "to his soul with hooks of steel," he had plucked it forth with an unflinching hand, and he now met his deep-rooted grief with the same lofty brow and unconquerable will with which he would have braved the tortures of the Dahcotah stake.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH THE READER WILL FIND A MORAL DISQUISITION SOMEWHAT TEDIOUS, A TRUE STORY SOMEWHAT INCREDIBLE, A CONFERENCE THAT ENDS IN PEACE, AND A COUNCIL THAT BETOKENS WAR.

It is not a feature in the character of Indians to do anything by halves ; their love and their hate, their patience and impatience, their abstinence and self-indulgence, all are apt to run into extremes. Moderation is essentially a virtue of civilization ; it is the result of forethought, reasoning, and a careful calculation of consequences, whereas the qualities of the Indian are rather the children of impulse, and are less modified by conflicting motives ; hence, the lights and shades of character are broader and more distinct ; and though it may be perhaps impossible that Indian villany should assume a deeper dye than that which may unfortunately be met with among civilized nations, it is not asserting too much to say, that there are to be found among these savages instances of disinterested, self-devoted heroism, such as are rarely heard of beyond the world of chivalry and romance.

This assertion will be received by many readers with an incredulous smile, and still more will be disposed to believe that it can be true only in reference to such virtues or actions as are the immediate result of a generous impulse ; but examples are not wanting to prove the argument to be defensible upon higher grounds. It will readily be admitted, that retributive justice, although consonant to the first principles of reason and natural law, cannot, when deliberately enforced, be considered in the light of a sudden impulse, much less can it be so considered when the party enforcing it is to be himself the sufferer by it ; and those who are conversant with the history of the Indian nations can testify that parallel instances to that which follows have frequently occurred among them.

Some years ago, a young married Indian, residing on the western bank of the Mississippi, quarrelled with another of his tribe, and in the heat of passion killed him with a blow of his tomahawk. After a few moments' reflection, he walked direct to the village, and presenting himself before the wigwam of the murdered man, called together his relations, and addressed them as follows :

" Your relative was my friend ; we were together,—some angry words arose between us,—I killed him on the spot. My life is in your

hands, and I have come to offer it to you ; but the summer hunting season has now begun. I have a wife and some young children, they have done you no wrong ; I wish to go out into the woods to kill a plentiful supply of meat, such as may feed them during the winter ; when I have done that, I will return and give myself to you."

The men assembly of mourners gave their assent, and the young man retired : for many weeks he toiled indefatigably in the chase, his wife jerked and dried the meat as he daily brought it in, until he saw that the supply was ample for the ensuing winter ; he then bid farewell to her and to his little ones, and once more presenting himself before the wigwam of his late friend, he said, "I am come : my squaw has meat for the winter, my life is now yours !" To these words the eldest male relative of the deceased replied, "It is well :" and rising from the ground, executed on the unresisting offender the summary justice of Indian retribution, by cleaving his skull with a tomahawk. Neither the self-devotion of the one, nor the unrelenting severity of the other, excited any peculiar sensation, each having acted according to the strict, though barbarous usage of the tribe.

Amongst a people accustomed to look with stoic composure on scenes such as that just described, War-Eagle had already won a distinguished name,

and he supported it on this trying occasion by resigning what was dearer to him than life, and crushing, as under a weight of iron, that passion which had been for years the hope and nourishment of his heart ; whether, albeit crushed and smothered, it still lingered there, is a secret which it is neither our wish nor our province to betray, but regarding which the reader may form his own opinion from the subsequent conduct of the chief.

His first step was to seek Reginald Brandon, whom he desired, by a silent signal, to leave the lodge and follow him. Our hero mechanically obeyed, in a painful state of excitement and agitation, feeling that he had been the unconscious means of blasting all the dearest hopes of his Indian friend ; and although he had intended no injury, he was sensible that he had done one, such as man can rarely forgive, and can never repair ; for even had the romantic generosity of friendship prompted him to resign all pretensions to Prairie-bird, he felt that such a resignation, while he was secure of her affections, would be mere mockery and insult. He knew also how prominent a feature is revenge in the Indian character, and thought it not improbable that he might be now following his conductor to some secluded spot, where their rivalry should be decided by mortal strife, and the survivor return to claim the lovely prize. This last thought, which would, under any

other circumstances, have nerved his arm and made his heart exult within him, now overwhelmed him with sadness, for he loved both Wingeneund and War-Eagle, they were endeared to him by reciprocal benefits, and he shrunk from a quarrel with the latter as from a fratricide.

Meanwhile the Indian strode rapidly forward; neither could Reginald detect the feelings that lurked beneath the dignified and unmoved composure of his countenance.

After walking in silence for some minutes, they reached a small hollow, where a few scattered alder-bushes screened them from the observation of the stragglers round the skirts of the Delaware camp: here the chief suddenly halted, and turning towards Reginald, bent on him the full gaze of his dark and lustrous eyes; the latter observed with surprise that their expression, as well as that of his usually haughty features, was a deep composed melancholy.

At length the Delaware broke the long and painful silence, addressing his companion, after his imperfect notion of English, in the following words:

“The Great Spirit sent a cloud between Netis and War-Eagle—a very black cloud; the lightning came from it and blinded the eyes of the Lenape chief, so that he looked on his brother and thought he saw an enemy. The Bad Spirit whis-

pered in his ear that the tongue of Netis was forked ; that the heart of Olitipa was false ; that she had listened to a mocking-bird, and had mingled for War-Eagle a cup of poison."

The Delaware paused for a moment ; his eye retained its steady but sad expression, his lips were firmly compressed, and not a muscle betrayed the intensity of his feeling ; but Reginald appreciated rightly the self-control that had conquered, in so severe a struggle, and grasping his friend's hand he said,

"Noble and generous son of the Lenape, the Bad Spirit has no power over a heart like yours ! Are we not brothers ? Have not the waters of the Muskingum, and the treacherous knife of the Huron, tied our hearts together, so that no fear, no suspicion, no falsehood, can come between them ? Netis believed that War-Eagle loved Olitipa only as a sister, or he would rather have given his scalp to Mahéga than have spoken soft words in the maiden's ear !"

"My brother's words are true," replied the Delaware, in the low and musical tone for which his voice was remarkable ; "War-Eagle knows it ; he has dreamt, and is now awake : Olitipa is his sister—the Great Spirit decrees that no child of an Indian warrior shall call her mother. It is enough." The countenance of the Delaware assumed a sterner expression as he continued :

"My brother must be ready; let his rifle be loaded and his eye open, for Tamenund has seen the snow of many winters; the Black Father is good and true, but his hand knows not the tomahawk: the Osage panther will crouch near the tent of Olitipa, and the feet of the Cut-throats* will not be far; before the sun goes down War-Eagle will see his brother again."

Thus saying, and waiting no reply, he returned with hearty strides towards the village. Reginald gazed long and earnestly after the retreating figure of the Indian, forgetting awhile, in admiration of his heroic self-control, the dangers that beset his beloved and his party.

"Could I," he asked himself, "could I, under the same circumstances, with all the light, and aid, and high motives of Christianity, have shown the forbearance, generosity, and self-command displayed by this noble heathen? Could I have seen all my long-cherished hopes, my warm and passionate love, blasted in a moment, and have so soon, so rankly, and so fully exculpated and forgiven the man to whom I owed my misery? I hope I might have done so, still I am afraid to ask my heart the question!"

Reginald's cheek glowed under the influence of this self-scrutiny, and he gladly availed himself of

* The Sioux, or Dahcotahs, are so designated by the Missouri tribes.

the approach of Paul Müller, to whom he related what had passed, and expressed in the warmest terms his admiration of his Indian brother's conduct. The good Missionary felt inexpressibly relieved at hearing the amicable issue now announced to him, for although he had never been made a confidant of War-Eagle's feelings towards Olitipa, his own observation had shown him of late that they were not exactly fraternal, and he had viewed with dread a rivalry between the two high-spirited young men, at a crisis when the aid of both might be so necessary to protect his fair pupil from the perils by which she was surrounded.

Meanwhile the machinations of Mahéga, which had been conducted with his accustomed secrecy and cunning, were almost ripe for execution ; several runners had interchanged communication between him and the Dahcotah chief, the latter of whom was delighted at the prospect thus unexpectedly offered, of taking vengeance on his ancient and hated Lenape foes. A secret council of the Osages had been held, at which a treaty with the Sioux and a rupture with the Delawares were discussed, and almost unanimously carried, Mahéga appearing rather to have coincided in the general determination than to have caused it by his influence and intrigues. The result of this council was, that the Osage village immediately struck their lodges, the horses were driven in,

skins, poultry, provisions, and all their utensils were packed upon them, and in a few hours the whole body moved in a north-easterly direction towards the upper fork of the river Konzas.

While they were departing, the Delaware council was summoned by a crier; Reginald and Baptiste were also invited to attend, the former in compliment to his station in the tribe as adopted brother of War-Eagle; the latter being recognised as a warrior of tried courage and experience. The Chiefs and Braves having seated themselves in a semicircle, the centre of which was occupied by Tamenund, the Great Medicine pipe was first passed round in silence and with the accustomed solemnities, after which Tamenund arose, and in a voice feeble from age, but distinctly audible, proceeded to explain to the assembly the affairs respecting which they had met to consult: while he was speaking, one of the Indians appointed to guard the entrance of the council lodge, came in and announced a messenger from the Osage encampment. Tamenund paused, and desired the messenger to be introduced.

All eyes were bent sternly on the envoy, who advanced with a haughty and dignified step into the centre of the lodge, where he stood still, and resting on a long lance which he held in his right hand, awaited, according to Indian custom, a signal from the council-chief to deliver his errand.

His dress, and the paint by which his body was adorned, had evidently been prepared with every attention to the niceties of Indian diplomacy, some portions of it being significant of peace or alliance, and others of hostile preparation; his right side was painted red, with streaks of black; on his left arm he wore a round shield of buffalo-hide, a quiver of arrows hung at his back, a tomahawk and knife were in his girdle, and in his left hand he carried a large string of wampum,* adorned with sundry ribbons and thongs of party-coloured deer-skin.

The Delawares recognized in the messenger a young kinsman of Mahéga, one who had already distinguished himself by several feats of daring gallantry, and had been lately enrolled among the braves of his nation: he had hitherto been upon the most friendly terms with the Lenapé, was familiar with their language, and had volunteered on more than one occasion to follow War-Eagle on the war-path; but the lines of paint and his accoutrements were now, as has before been observed, so carefully selected, that their practised eyes were unable to decide whether peace or war was the object of his mission; neither was any

* Wampum, a corruption of the word "wampampea," small shells strung together, and used by the Indians for barter among themselves; a belt of wampum is the emblem of peace, as the hatchet, or tomahawk, is that of war.

inference to be drawn from his countenance or bearing, for after the first cold salutation on entering, he leaned on his lance in an attitude of haughty indifference. Under these circumstances he was not invited to sit, neither was the pipe handed to him, but Tamenund briefly addressed him as follows :

"The messenger of the Osage may speak. The ears of the Lenapé are open."

"Flying-arrow," replied the young man, in a modest and quiet tone, "knows that many winters have passed over the head of the Lenape chief; he is sorry to speak hard words to Tamenund."

"Let the young warrior speak freely; Tamenund knows that he is the mouth of the Osage council," was the grave reply.

"The Washashee say that the Lenapé have walked in a crooked path. The council have assembled; and the words delivered to Flying-arrow are these. The Washashee allowed the Lenapé to kill meat on their hunting-ground, they smoked the pipe together, and gave each other the wampum-belt of peace; but the Lenapé hearts are white, though their skin is red; their tongues are smooth with telling many lies: they have brought the pale-faces here to aid them in driving the Washashee from the hunting fields of their fathers! Is it not true?" continued the fearless envoy, in a louder strain; "they have done all

they can to throw dirt upon the lodges of those whom they call brothers. When Mahéga offered to take the daughter of Tamenund as his wife, what was said to him? Does not the pale-face who crept upon him and defiled his medicine, still sit and smoke at the Lenape fire? Mahéga says, let Tamenund give him Olitipa for a wife, and the pale-face, called Netis, as a prisoner, and let him send back the other white men to the Great River; then Mahéga will believe that the hearts of the Lenapé are true to the friendship pledged on this belt."

Thus saying, he shook the wampun before the assembled Delawares with an air of proud defiance. A brief pause followed this daring speech; the heart of War-Eagle boiled within him, but a scornful smile sat upon his haughty countenance, as he waited composedly for the reply of his father, who seemed engaged in deep and serious meditation.

Reginald had, of course, been unable to follow the envoy's discourse, but his quick ear had detected his own name; and a fierce look, which accompanied its pronounciation, told him that he was personally interested in the object of the Osage's message. Having gathered from Baptiste, in a whisper, the nature of Magéha's charge and demand, a flush of indignation coloured his brow, but the examples of self-command that he had so

lately seen, and that he still witnessed in the iron features by which he was surrounded, taught him to place a like restraint upon his own feelings, and to await the reply of the aged chief.

The latter, fixing his eye sternly upon the envoy, thus addressed him, "Mahéga has filled the young brave's mouth with lies. The hearts of the Lenapé are true as the guiding-star.* They are faithful to their friends, they fear no enemies. Tamenund will not give Olitipa to Mahéga, nor his adopted son to be the Washashee's prisoner. Tamenund is old, but he is not blind, Mahéga wishes to become a friend of the Dahcotahs. It is well, he will find among them hearts as bad, and tongues as forked as his own! I have spoken."

A deep murmur of approbation followed the aged chief's brief but energetic harangue, and as soon as it was concluded, the fearless messenger drew a sharp knife from his girdle, and severing the wampum-belt, he cast the two halves on the ground, saying, "It is well! thus is the league between the Washashee and the Lenapé divided."

Baptiste, to whom Reginald had again addressed a few words in a whisper, now rose, and having requested permission of Tamenund, said to the Osage messenger, "Netis desires you tell Mahéga that he is a liar,—brave enough to frighten wo-

* The North Star is often alluded to by the Indian tribes, under this and other similar denominations.

men, but nothing more. If he is a warrior, let him come to-morrow at sunrise to the open prairie, north of the camp ; the friends of both shall stand back three arrowflights apart ; Netis will meet him with a rifle and a hunting-knife ; Olitipa will not be there to save his life again !”

Another murmur of approbation went round the assembly, many of whom had already heard of the rough treatment that the gigantic Osage had received at Reginald's hands, but hearing it now confirmed by the lips of a tried warrior, like Grande-Hâche, they looked with increased respect and esteem on the adopted brother of War-Eagle.

“ Flying-arrow will tell Mahéga,” was the brief reply ; and the messenger, glancing his eye haughtily around the circle, left the lodge and returned to the encampment of his tribe. After his departure the council continued their deliberations for some time, and had not yet concluded them, when a distant and repeated shouting attracted their attention, and a Delaware youth, of about fifteen years of age, rushed into the lodge, breathless, and bleeding from a wound inflicted by an arrow, which had pierced his shoulder. A few hurried sentences explained to the chiefs the news of which he was the bearer. It appeared that he had been tending, in a bottom not far distant, a herd of horses, chiefly belonging to Tamenund, War-Eagle, and the party of white-men, when a band

of mounted Sioux came sweeping down the valley at full speed ; two or three young Delawares, who formed the out-picquet on that side, had been taken completely by surprise, and paid with their lives the penalty of their carelessness.

The wounded youth who brought the intelligence had only escaped by his extreme swiftness of foot, and by the unwillingness of the enemy to approach too near the camp. Thus had the Dahcotahs succeeded in carrying off, by a bold stroke, upwards of one hundred of the best horses from the Delaware village ; and Reginald soon learnt, to his inexpressible annoyance and regret, that Nekimi was among the number of the captives. A hurried consultation followed, in which War-Eagle, throwing off the modest reserve that he had practised during the council, assumed his place as leader of the Lenape braves, of whom he selected forty of the most active and daring, to accompany him on the difficult and dangerous expedition that was to be instantly undertaken for the recovery of the stolen horses.

Reginald and Baptiste eagerly volunteered, and were instantly accepted by War-Eagle ; but it was not without some persuasion on the part of the Guide, that the chief allowed Monsieur Perrot to be of the party ; that faithful valet insisted, however, so obstinately upon his right to attend his master, that, on Baptiste enjoining that he

should implicitly obey orders, he was permitted to form one of the selected band.

In less than half an hour, from the receipt of the above disastrous intelligence, the party left the camp well armed and equipped, each man carrying three pounds of dried buffalo meat; and Baptiste secured twice that quantity to his sturdy person, thinking it probable that Reginald's endurance of hunger might not prove proportionate to his active qualities. The latter had, indeed, forgotten the meat altogether, for he passed the last few minutes of his stay within the camp, in bidding farewell to "Prairie-bird," and in assuring her that he would not be long absent, but trusted soon to return with his favorite Nekimi. At his departure, Reginald left the strictest orders with Bearskin (who remained in charge of his party) to keep a faithful watch over the safety of Prairie-bird, and to follow the injunctions that he might receive from Tamenund and Paul Müller.

The small band, who, at the instigation of Mahéga, had stolen the Delaware horses, were chosen warriors, well-mounted, thoroughly trained to the predatory warfare in which they were now engaged, and ready, either to defend their prize against an equal force, or to baffle the pursuit of a superior one. As War-Eagle had lost many of his best horses, he resolved to follow the enemy's trail on foot, but he desired two or three of his

most active and enterprising followers, whose horses had not been stolen, to hover on the rear of the retreating party, to watch their motives, and bring back any intelligence that might aid him in the pursuit.

The select band of Delawares moved swiftly forward under the guidance of their young leader ; close upon his steps followed Reginald, burning with impatience to recover his favourite steed ; next to him came Baptiste, then Perrot, and the remainder of the Lenape warriors.

The prairie-grass trodden down by the hoofs of the galloping and affrighted steeds driven from their pasture, afforded a trail that could be traced without difficulty, and the trampled banks of several slow and lazy streams, which they passed in their course, marked the headlong course taken by their fugitive steeds and their fierce drivers.

We will leave the pursuers for a time, and follow the movements of Mahéga, who was now acting in concert with the Sioux, and who contrived by his superior address to direct their plans, as completely as if he had been himself the chief of their tribe. Having accompanied the Osage village, fourteen of fifteen miles on their route to the northward, he ordered a halt by the side of a stream, in a valley adjacent to the encampment of their new allies, the two bands forming a body so superior in number to the Delawares, that they

had no cause to fear an attack, especially as they learnt from their scouts that War-Eagle and his followers had gone in an opposite direction in pursuit of the horse stealing party.

The evening was dark, and favoured the execution of a plot which Mahéga had formed, and in furtherance of which all his preceding measures had been taken. As soon as the sun had set, he selected one hundred of the bravest and most experienced warriors in his tribe, whom he armed only with bow and arrows, knife, and tomahawk ; strictly forbidding the use of any firearms ; for he well knew that the latter were far from being effective weapons in the hands of his followers, especially in such an expedition as that in which he was engaged. Swiftly and silently they moved under their leader's guidance, who, directing his course towards the south-east, brought them, after a few hours' march, to the line of wood skirting the great Prairie. Aware that the warriors remaining in the Delaware encampment would be prepared against any surprise from the quarter in which the Sioux were posted, his present object was to make his attack from the opposite side, in order to effect which, undiscovered, the greatest skill and rapidity were necessary.

It was on occasions such as these that the qualities of the Osage chief were most conspicuously exhibited ; with light and noiseless step,

he led his party through the depths of the forest, and during a swift march of many hours not a word was spoken ; now and then he paused as a startled deer rustled through the thicket, and once or twice, when a stray moonbeam, forcing its way through the foliage, silvered the bark of the sycamore, he cast his eye upwards, as if to learn from the leaves the direction of the wind, or to scan the heaven in search of one of those stars, which the imperfect, but sagacious astronomy of the Indians teaches them to recognise as guides.

Leave we them to pursue their dark and circuitous path, and let us transport the reader to the interior of the Delaware encampment, where (as it may be remembered) Bearskin was left in command of that portion of the white men who had not accompanied their leader in pursuit of the Sioux.

Paul Müller sat late at night in the tent of the Prairie-bird ; on the rude table lay the Bible from which he had been reading, and explaining some difficulties that had perplexed her strong, yet inquiring mind ; afterwards they had turned the conversation to the scenes which had occurred within the last few days, and which were calculated to inspire serious anticipations of coming evil. Prairie-bird made no effort to conceal from her affectionate instructor how entirely her heart was given to Reginald ; she knew his bold and fearless

disposition ; she knew too the wily cunning of the powerful tribe against whom his expedition was undertaken, and more than one heavy sigh escaped her when she thought of the risks that he must incur.

The good Missionary employed every possible argument to allay her fears, but none so effectively as that which referred to the protection of that Being who had been from childhood her hope, her trust, and her shield, and, bidding her good night, he had the pleasure of seeing her agitated spirit resume its usual composure. He then wrapped his cloak round his shoulders, and went out to see what provision Bearskin had made for the security of the camp, during the absence of Reginald, War-Eagle, and their party. The rough old boatman was smoking his pipe over the embers of a fire in front of the lodge where he slept ; beside him lay, half-asleep, the gigantic Mike Smith ; and the other white men were within the lodge, each having his rifle within reach and his knife and pistols in his belt. Bearskin returned the greeting of the Missionary with blunt civility, and informed him that he had been to the lodge of Tamenund, where it had been agreed to throw forward an outpost of a dozen light, active young Indians, half a mile beyond the camp, in the direction of the Sioux ; runners had also been sent round to desire the warriors

to be ready, and all the usual precautions taken, such as are observed by Indians in the neighbourhood of a dangerous enemy.

Satisfied with these arrangements, Paul Müller returned to his tent, and throwing himself on the pile of buffalo skins that formed his bed, was soon fast asleep. He knew not how long he had slept, when he was aroused by a cry such as none who has once heard it can mistake or forget. Scarcely had that shrill and savage whoop pierced the dull silence of the night, when every creature within the encampment sprang to their feet; the braves and warriors, seizing their weapons, rushed to the quarter whence the cry proceeded, while the women and children, crowding round the aged and defenceless men, waited in suspense the result of the sudden and fierce attack. The noise and the tumult came from the northern quarter, that most remote from the lodges of Tamenund and Prairie-bird. Sixty of the chosen Osage warriors had fallen upon the small outpost placed to give the alarm, and, driving them easily before them and killing some, entered the camp almost simultaneously with the survivors. This band was led by that daring young warrior before introduced to the reader under the name of Flying-Arrow, who now burnt with desire to render his name in the war-annals of his tribe famous as that of his kinsman Mahéga. Nor were the De-

laware warriors slow to meet the invaders, with a courage equal to their own; the conflict was fierce and confused, for the moon was no longer up, and the pale stars were contending, in a cloudy sky, with the dim grey hue that precedes the dawn of day, so that the dusky figures of the combatants were scarcely visible, and by their voices alone could they distinguish friends from foes.

At the first alarm, Bearskin, with his habitual coolness, ordered Mike Smith, with three of his men, to retire into the rear, to assist in protecting the lodge of Tamenund and the tent of Prairie-bird, while he led the remainder to check the advance of the Osages from the northward. For some time the latter seemed to be gaining ground, but the Delawares, still superior in number and hastening to the spot, aided by Bearskin and his followers, recovered their lost advantage, and the combat raged with renewed fury.

At this crisis Mahéga, who had succeeded in gaining, unperceived, the valley to the southward of the Delaware camp, fell upon their rear with his reserve of forty men; overthrowing all who opposed him, he forced his way towards the white tent, which the advancing light of dawn rendered now easily distinguishable from the dark-coloured lodges around it; shouting his battle-cry with a voice like a trumpet, he rushed onward, caring

not, apparently, for scalps or trophies, but determined on securing the prize for which he had already broken his faith, and imbrued his hands in the blood of allies who had done him no injury. A gallant band of Delawares surrounded their aged chief, whose trembling hand now grasped a tomahawk that had for twenty years reposed idly in his belt. Prairie-bird had sprung from her couch, and already joined in the brief, but earnest prayer, which Paul Müller breathed at her side; he recognized the Osage war-cry, and divining the chief object of their terrible leader, he whispered solemnly to her,

“My dear child, if I am soon taken from you, keep, nevertheless, your trust in God. I see that knife still in your girdle; I know what you have once dared; if it be the will of Heaven, you must be prepared patiently to endure pain, sorrow, confinement, or oppression; remember, it is only as the last resource against dishonour, that you may have recourse to it.”

The maiden replied not, but a glance from her dark eye assured him that he was understood, and would be obeyed; many emotions contended in her bosom, but, for the moment, reverence and attachment to her affectionate instructor prevailed over all others, and, dropping on her knees before him, she covered his hand with kisses, saying,

"Dear Father, if we must be separated, bless, bless your grateful child."

The worthy Missionary, albeit accustomed to resign himself entirely to the will of Heaven, could scarcely command himself sufficiently to utter aloud the blessing that he implored upon her head; but the shouts and cries of the combatants were every moment approaching nearer, and seizing his staff, he went to the aperture in front of the lodge, in order to ascertain how the tide of conflict was turning.

The first object that met his view was the aged Tamenund, who had fallen in his hurried endeavour to rush to the combat, but was now partly supported and partly detained by his wailing wives and daughters, while the tomahawk that had dropped from his nerveless arm lay upon the ground beside him; as soon as he saw Paul Müller, he called him, and said, in a low voice,

"The breath of Tamenund is going; he has lived long enough; the voices of his fathers are calling to him from the far hunting-fields; he will go, and pray the Great Spirit to give the scalps of these snake-tongued Washashe to the knife of War-Eagle." After a moment's pause, the old man continued: "I know that the heart of the Black Father is good to the Lenape; he has been a friend of many days to the lodge of Tamenund; he must be a father to Olitipa;

she is a sweet-scented flower; the Great Spirit has given rain and sunshine to nourish its growth, and its roots are deep in Tamenund's heart; the Black Father will not allow it to be trodden under the feet of Mahéga." While saying these words he drew from under his blanket a small leathern bag, the neck of which was carefully closed with ligaments of deer-sinew that had been dipped in wax, or some similarly adhesive substance. "This," he added, "is the medicine-bag of Oli-tipa; the Black Father must keep it when Tamenund is gone, and, while it is safe, the steps of the Bad Spirit will not draw near her."

The Missionary took the bag, and concealed it immediately under his vest, but, before he had time to reply to his aged friend, a terrific cry announced that the Osages had succeeded in breaking through the Delaware ranks, and a fearful scene of confusion, plunder, and massacre ensued; the faithful Missionary hastened to the side of his trembling pupil, resolved to die in defending her from injury, while the air was rent by the shouts of the victors, and the yells and shrieks of those suffering under their relentless fury.

Mike Smith and his men plied their weapons with determined courage and resolution, and several of the Osages paid with their lives the forfeit

of their daring attack ; still the survivors pressed forward, bearing back the white men by force of numbers, and allowing not a moment for the reloading of the fire-arms. The voice of Mahéga rose high above the surrounding din, and all seemed to shrink from the terrible weapon which he wielded as if it had been a light cane or small-sword ; it was a short bludgeon, headed with a solid ball of iron, from which protruded several sharp iron spikes, already red with human blood. Mike Smith came boldly forward to meet him, holding in his left hand a discharged horse-pistol, and in his right a heavy cutlass, with which last he made a furious cut at the advancing Osage. The wary chief neither received nor parried it, but, springing lightly aside, seized the same moment for driving his heavy mace full on the unguarded forehead of his opponent, and the unfortunate woodsman dropped like an ox felled at the shambles ; the fierce Indian, leaping forward, passed his knife twice through the prostrate body, and tearing off the scalp, waved the bloody trophy over his head.

Disheartened by the fall of their brave and powerful companion, the remaining white men offered but a feeble resistance, and the Osage chief rushed onwards to the spot where only some wounded Delawareans and a few devoted and half-armed youths

were gathered around the aged Tamenund, determined to die at his side. It is not necessary to pursue the sickening details of the narrative.

The old man received his death-blow with a composed dignity worthy of his race, and his faithful followers met their fate with equal heroism, neither expecting nor receiving mercy.

The victory was not now complete, and both the scattered Delawares and the remaining white men fled for shelter and safety to the nearest points in the dense line of forest; few, if any would have reached it had not the war-pipe of Mahéga called his warriors around him. None dared to disobey the signal, and in a few minutes they stood before him in front of the tent within which the faithful Missionary still cheered and supported his beloved pupil. The fierce Osage, counting over his followers, found that fifteen were killed or mortally wounded; but the loss on the part of their opponents was much heavier, without reckoning upwards of a score of prisoners whose hands and legs were tightly fastened with bands of withy and elm-bark.

Mahéga, putting his head into the aperture of the tent, ordered Paul Müller to come forth.

"Resistance is unavailing," whispered the Missionary to the weeping girl; "it will be harder with thee if I obey not this cruel man. Practise now, dear child, the lessons that we have so

often read together, and leave the issue to Him who has promised never to leave nor forsake those who trust in him."

So saying he kissed her forehead, and gently disengaging himself from the hand that still clung to his garment, he went forth from the tent, and stood before Mahéga.

That wily chief was well aware that both the Missionary and his fair pupil had many warm friends among his own tribe; there was in fact scarcely a family among them that had not experienced from one or both, some act of charity or kindness; he had resolved therefore to treat them without severity, and while he assured himself of the person of Olitipa, to send her instructor to some distant spot, where neither his advice nor his reproofs were to be feared; with this determination he addressed him briefly, as follows,—

"The Black Father will travel with my young men towards the east; he is no longer wanted here; he may seek the lodges of the Lenape squaws beyond the Great River; he may advise them to remain where they are, to dig and grow corn, and not to come near the hunting-fields of the Washashe. My young men will travel three days with him; they may meet strangers,—if he is silent, his life is safe; if he speaks, their tomahawk drinks his blood; when they have left him, his tongue and his feet are free. I have spoken"

Mahéga added a few words in a lower tone to the young warrior who was to execute his orders, and who, with two others, now stood by his prisoner ; there was a lowering frown on the brow of the chief, and a deep meaning in his tone, showing plainly that there would be danger in disobeying the letter of those commands.

Paul Müller, advancing a few steps, addressed the chief in the Delaware tongue, with which he knew him to be familiar. " Mahéga is a great chief, and the Black Father is weak, and must obey him ; before he goes he will speak some words which the chief must lock up in his heart. He loves Olitipa, he wishes to make her his wife ; it may be, after a season, that she may look kindly upon him ; but she is not like other maidens, she is under the care of the Great Spirit. Mahéga is strong, but her medicine is stronger. She can hide the moon behind a cloud, and gather the fire of the sun as the daughters of the Washashe gather the river-waters in a vessel ; let the chief remember the Black Father's last words. If Mahéga protects Olitipa and what belongs to her in the tent, it may be better for him when the Great Spirit is angry ; if he offers her harm or insult, he will die like a dog, and wolves will pick his bones."

The Missionary delivered this warning with a dignity and solemnity so earnest, that the eye of the fierce but superstitious savage quailed before

him; and pleased to mark the effect of his words, Paul Müller turned and left the spot, muttering in his own tongue to himself, "God will doubtless forgive my endeavour to protect through this artifice, a forlorn and friendless maiden, left in the hands of a man so cruel and unscrupulous."

In a few minutes the good Missionary had completed the slight preparation requisite for his journey, and accompanied by his Indian escort, left the ruined and despoiled village with a heavy heart.

As soon as Mahéga was somewhat recovered from the startling effect of Paul Müller's parting address, he made his dispositions for the further movements of his band with his usual rapidity and decision; he was well aware that his position was now one of great peril, that in a short time War-Eagle and his party would be informed of all that had passed, and would seek a bloody revenge; he knew also that some of the fugitive Whites or Delawares might speedily arm a body of the inhabitants of the frontier against him, and that he would be altogether unable to maintain himself in the region that he now occupied.

Under these circumstances he made up his own mind as to the course that he would pursue; and having first given all the necessary orders for the burial of the Osage dead and the care of the wounded, as well as for the security of the prison-

ers, he called together the heads of his party, and having laid before them his plans, asked their advice, with a tone and manner probably resembling that with which, a few years later, Napoleon was in the habit of asking the counsel of his generals and captains; a tone indicating that his course being already determined, nothing was expected of them but compliance.

CHAPTER VIII.

WAR-EAGLE AND REGINALD, WITH THEIR PARTY, PURSUE THE
DAHCOTAHS.

WE left Reginald, and War-Eagle's party, in pursuit of the marauding band of Sioux horse-stealers. They continued their toilsome march with unabated speed until nightfall, when the trail was no longer distinguishable: they then halted, and while they ate a scanty supper, the mounted Delawares, who had been sent forward, returned, bringing with them two wearied horses which had escaped, in the hurried flight, from their captors.

War-Eagle, summoning Baptiste to his side, questioned the young man closely as to the appearance and direction of the trail. From their answers he learnt that its course was northward, but that it bore gradually towards the east, especially after a brief halt, which the Sioux had made for refreshment; a gleam shot athwart the dusky features of the young chief at this intelligence, but he made no observation, and contented himself with asking the opinion of his more experienced companion.

The Guide, taking off his hunting-cap, allowed the evening breeze to play through the grisly hairs which were scattered, not too plentifully, on his weather-beaten forehead, as if his reflective powers might thence derive refreshment ; but, apparently, the expedient was not, at least, on this occasion, rewarded with success, for, after meditating in silence for a few seconds, he shook his head and owned that he saw no clue to the intentions of the party whom they were pursuing. The young chief had his eye still bent upon the ground, seemingly employed in observing a large rent, which the day's march had made in his mocassin ; but the woodsman read in the lines of his intelligent countenance that the mind was busily engaged in following a connected train of thought.

After allowing a few minutes to pass in silence, the Guide, addressing his companion, said, "Can War-Eagle see the Dahcotah path? It is hid from the eyes of Grande-Hâche."

"The night is dark, and the eyes cannot see the trail ; but the wolf finds his way to the wounded bison, and the blue dove keeps her course to her nest in the mountain. The Great Spirit has not made the Lenape warrior more ignorant than the bird, or the brute ; War-Eagle knows the path of the Dahcotah dogs." He then bent down towards the ear of Baptiste, and whispered to him long and earnestly in the Delaware tongue.

"Capote-bleu ! but the boy is right," exclaimed the Guide, in his own mixed dialect ; "the dogs have only taken this northern start to mislead us ; they are not making for the Missouri river, but intend to double back and join their village, now lying to the eastward of us. The boy is right ; my brain must be getting as worn-out as my hunting shirt, or I should have understood their drift. I see his plan is to lie in cash * for them on their return. Well, if he can make sure of his game, I will say that he's fit to be a war-chief, for these Sioux have a long start, and the village must be many miles to the right."

As he made these reflections half aloud, Reginald caught their general bearing ; and though he had great confidence in the sagacity of his Indian friend, still he felt a chill of disappointment at the idea that the pursuit was to be abandoned, for what appeared to him the hopeless chance of intercepting a small band of Sioux of whose course they were ignorant, in a boundless extent of prairie like that around him. He had, however, good sense enough to conceal all traces of his disappointment, knowing that on such an expedition there can be but one leader, and that, without unanimity and discipline, failure must ensue.

* An expression used by the Canadian hunters for an ambush ; the "cache" is also familiar to all readers of western story, as the place of deposit for peltries, or stores.

War-Eagle now called one of the young Lenape warriors to his side, and gave him brief instructions, to the effect, that he was to choose three others of the best runners of the party, and accompanied by the mounted Indians, to start with the earliest dawn on the Dahcotah trail, which they were to follow as close as possible without discovering themselves. He then desired Reginald and Baptiste to divide the band into watches, and to sleep alternately, but not to move until he returned.

Having given these few directions, without allowing himself either food or rest after a march of so many hours, he drew his belt tighter around his loins, and started on his solitary excursion. Reginald watched the retreating figure of his friend until it was lost in the deepening gloom, and turning to the Guide he said,

“Baptiste, I cannot but envy War-Eagle the possession of sinews that seem unconscious of fatigue, and eyes that require no slumber! We have marched from daylight until this late hour without either rest or refreshment, and I confess I am very glad of this seat on my buffalo-robe, and this slice of dried venison, with a draught of water; War-Eagle, however, walks off into the prairie, as if he had just started fresh from repose, and Heaven only knows where, or for what purpose he is going.”

"Master Reginald," replied the Guide, throwing himself lazily down by the side of his young leader; "I will not deny that War-Eagle's sinews are strung like the bow of a Pawnee, for I have been on a trail with him before, and few could follow it so long or so true; but there has been a time," he added, casting his eyes down on his worn and soiled leggins, "when these limbs of mine would have kept me for a week at the heels of the fleetest Dahcotah that ever crossed the country of the Stone-eaters.* Those days are gone, but when the game's afoot, perhaps there may be younger men who might give out before old Baptiste, yet."

As he spoke the eye of the Guide rested with a comic grin on Monsieur Perrot, who, with a countenance somewhat rueful, was endeavouring to masticate a crude pomme de prairie† that one of the Delawares had given to him, with the assurance that it was "very good!"

* The country of the Stone-eaters, or, as they are called in their own language, the Assineboins. This is a branch of the Great Sioux tribe to the northward of the Missouri river; the region is peculiarly wild and broken, and the Indians inhabiting it are famous for their pedestrian activity and endurance.

† Pommes de prairie are small roots, somewhat resembling white radishes, that are found in great abundance in the Western Wilderness, being in some places the only esculent vegetable within a range of several hundred miles; when eaten raw they are tough, tasteless, and hard of digestion, but if boiled or stewed, are tolerably palatable and wholesome.

"I believe you, Baptiste," said Reginald, humouring the old hunter's pardonable vanity; "I believe you, indeed, and if the Sioux offer us a long chase, as appears likely, the crack of your rifle will be heard before the foremost of our party has come to close quarters with them; but you have not answered my question relative to War-Eagle's excursion during this dark night."

"He is gone," replied the Guide, "to examine the ground carefully, perhaps even to approach the northern border of the Dahcotah encampment; he will then judge of the route by which these horse-stealing vagabonds are likely to return, and will choose a place for us to conceal ourselves for an attack."

"I understand it all, Baptiste; it seems to be a bold, well-devised plan, if War-Eagle is only correct in his guess at their intentions; meanwhile let us post our sentries, and get what sleep we can, for to-morrow may be a busy day."

They accordingly divided their party into watches, Baptiste and Perrot with one Indian taking the first, and Reginald undertaking the charge of the second. The night was gloomy, and few stars were visible through the thick clouds by which the heavens were overspread; the men were partially sheltered by some stunted alder-bushes which grew by the side of the stream, with whose waters they had cooled their thirst,

and those who were not destined to the first watch soon fell asleep, lulled by the distant howling of a hungry pack of prairie wolves.

Towards the close of Reginald's watch, about an hour before daybreak, a dusky figure glided with noiseless step towards the encampment; the young man cocked his rifle, in order to be prepared against surprise, but in the next moment recognized the commanding form of his friend, and hailed him by name.

"Netis!" replied the chief, sitting down beside him, and wringing the water from his leggins, which had been saturated partly by the heavy dew on the long grass through which he had made his way, and partly by the streams which he had been obliged to ford.

"Has my brother found a path?" inquired Reginald in a whisper; "has he been near the Dahcotah village?"

"He has," replied the chief; "he has seen their lodges."

"Can my brother find the path by which the horse-stealers will return?"

"He can guess, he cannot be sure," replied the young Indian, modestly.

Here the conversation closed, and in a few minutes the little party were aroused and a-foot, their leader being resolved that not a moment

should be lost, as soon as there was sufficient light for pursuing the trail.

When on the point of starting, Baptiste, taking War-Eagle aside, whispered in his ear a few words, on which the latter appeared to reflect seriously and somewhat in doubt; he nodded his head, however, and replied, "Well, it is good."

The Guide informed Reginald that at his own request he was to accompany the party on the trail.

"You see, Master Reginald," he continued, "I am a true-scented old hound, and if these young ones run too fast, I may perhaps help 'em at a pinch; then if we catch the scoundrels you will be in their front and we in their rear, and they will be as bad off as a Kentucky coon between two of old Dan Boone's cur-dogs. Remember the signals," he added impressively, touching the bugle slung across his shoulder. "We have not practised them of late, but I have forgot none of them; they may do us a good turn here; stick close to War-Eagle, you are sworn brothers, and, according to Indian fashion, if he falls you must die with him or revenge him."

"That will I, honest Baptiste," replied our hero; "the Lenapé shall not say that their chief was deserted by his adopted brother, neither will I forget the signals—farewell!"

Here the two parties separated, that of Bap-

tiste resuming their pursuit of the trail, and that of War-Eagle following in silence the rapid strides of their young chief across the prairie to the eastward. He marched for several hours in silence—his brow wore an expression of thoughtfulness, and he stopped several times as if to scan the bearing and the distance of every remarkable elevation or object in the undulating prairie which they were crossing. It was now about midday ; they had walked since daybreak without halt or food ; the rays of the sun were fiercely hot, and it required all the determined energy of Reginald's character, to enable him to endure in silence the heat and thirst by which he was oppressed ; as for Monsieur Perrot, he had contrived to secrete a small flask of brandy about his person, more than one mouthful of which, mingled with the muddy water of the pools which they passed, had hitherto enabled him to keep pace with the rest of the party, but he was now beginning to lag behind, and some of the Indians were obliged to urge and assist him forward.

At this juncture War-Eagle suddenly stopped, and uttering a sound like a low hiss, crouched upon the ground, an attitude into which the whole party sunk in a moment. Laying a finger lightly on Reginald's arm, he pointed to the upper range of a distant hill, saying, " There are men !" Our hero, shading his eyes with his hand, looked in the direc-

tion indicated, but after a careful survey, he could see nothing but the faint green reposing in the sunny haze of noon ; he shook his head ; but War-Eagle replied with a quiet smile,

“ My brother saw the rifles behind the log near the Muskingum ; his eyes are very true, but they have not looked much at the prairie ; let him use his medicine glass-pipe.”

When Reginald had adjusted his telescope, he looked again to the spot on which the bright clear eye of War-Eagle was still rivetted like the gaze of a Highland deer hound, who has caught sight of a hart browsing on the further side of some wide and rocky glen.

“ By heaven, it is true !” he exclaimed. “ I see them, one, two, three, mounted Indians ; they are at speed—and buffalo are galloping before them.”

“ That is good,” said War-Eagle ; “ keep the glass-pipe before them, and say if they go out of sight, or if more appear.”

Reginald did so : and after a few minutes, reported that they had disappeared over a neighbouring height, and that no others had come in view.

Upon this, War-Eagle rose, saying, “ My brother shall drink and rest—there are shade and water not far.” As he had said, half an hour’s march brought them to a clump of stunted alders, beside which flowed a stream, the waters of which

were tolerably fresh and cool. Here they ate some dried buffalo meat, and satisfied their thirst, after which they followed with renewed spirits their gay leader, whose iron and sinewy frame seemed (like that of Antæus of old) to gather fresh strength every time that his foot fell upon the earth. The prairie through which they now passed was extremely hilly and broken, intersected by many steep and narrow ravines; threading his way amongst these, the chief frequently stopped to examine the footmarks which had been left by bison, or other animals, and often bent his searching glance along the sides of the hills around him. The only living creatures seen during the whole march were a few bulls, lazily cropping the prairie grass, as if conscious that their tough carcase, and burnt, soiled hides, rendered them at this season worthless to the hunters, who had driven from them the cows and the younger bulls of the herd. Emerging from these defiles, the party came to a broader valley, the sides of which were very steep; along the bottom ran a stream of considerable magnitude, on the banks of which was a large tract of copsewood, consisting apparently of alder, poplar, and birch, and affording ample space for concealing a body of several hundred men.

Towards this wood, War-Eagle led the way; and when he reached a few bushes distant from it

some hundred yards, he desired the rest of the party to lie still, while he went forward alone to explore. During his absence, Reginald occupied himself with examining through his glass the sides of the valley, but could see neither man nor any other living creature; and when War-Eagle returned and conducted them into the wood, Reginald could read on his friend's countenance that he was in high spirits at having reached this point undiscovered.

When they came to the centre of the woodland, they found a broad trail, near which they were carefully posted by the chief, in such a manner that, themselves unseen, they could command a view of any one passing along it.

The party led by Baptiste was not less successful in carrying out the instructions given to them by War-Eagle. After a rapid and toilsome march of many hours upon the Dahcotah trail, they came at length in sight of their enemies; although at a distance of many miles, the prudence and caution of the experienced scout controlled the impetuous ardour of the young Delawares, who were burning to revenge the insult offered to their tribe. But Baptiste was aware that to attack with his present force would be hopeless, and he bent all his energies to creep as near to the Sioux as possible, so that he might be ready to dash in upon their rear, in case he should find that the

ambuscade of War-Eagle was successfully laid; at the same time, the hardy woodsman was determined not to allow them, under any circumstances, to gain the village without making by day or by night one bold effort for the recovery of the horses.

A habit of self-control was one of the distinguishing features of the Guide's character; and although his hatred of the Sioux was fierce and intense, as we have seen in the earlier part of this tale, he now conducted his operations with a cool deliberation that might almost have been mistaken for indifference; selecting the most intelligent warrior among the Lenapé, he sent him forward to creep on the trail; he himself followed at a short distance; then the other runners at short intervals, and the mounted Indians were desired to keep entirely out of sight in the rear. In this order they continued the pursuit; and by the skilful selection of ground, and taking advantage of every trifling hill or ravine over which they passed, he contrived at length to approach as near as he deemed it prudent to venture until he should see the result of the stratagem devised by War-Eagle.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESERTED VILLAGE IN THE WEST. — MAHEGA CARRIES OFF PRAIRIE-BIRD, AND ENDEAVOURS TO BAFFLE PURSUIT.

WE must now shift the scene to the spot where the Delaware village had been encamped. What a change had a few days produced ! The lodges of the chiefs, with their triangular poles bearing their shields and trophies ; the white tent of Prairie-bird, the busy crowds of women and children ; the troops of horses, the songs and dances of the warriors—all were gone ! and in their stead nothing was to be seen but a flock of buzzards, gorging themselves on a meal too revolting to be described, and a pack of wolves snarling and quarrelling over the remains of the unfortunate Lenape victims.

On the very spot where the tent of Olitipa had been pitched, and where the marks of the tent poles were still easily recognised, stood a solitary Indian, in an attitude of deep musing ; his ornamented hunting shirt and leggins, proclaimed his

chieftain rank ; the rifle on which he leaned was of the newest and best workmanship, and his whole appearance was singularly striking ; but the countenance was that which would have rivetted the attention of a spectator, had any been there to look upon it, for it blended in its gentle, yet proud lineaments, a delicate beauty almost feminine, with a high heroic sternness, that one could scarcely have thought it possible to find in a youth only just emerging from boyhood : there was too a deep silent expression of grief, rendered yet more touching by the fortitude with which it was controlled and repressed. Drear and desolate as was the scene around, the desolation of that young heart was yet greater ; father, brother, friend ! the beloved sister, the affectionate instructor ; worst of all, the tribe, the ancient people of whose chiefs he was the youngest and last surviving scion, all swept away at "one full swoop !" And yet no tear fell from his eye, no murmur escaped his lip, and the energies of that heroic, though youthful spirit, rose above the tempest, whose fearful ravages he now contemplated with stern and gloomy resolution.

In this sketch the reader will recognise Wingenund, who had been absent, as was mentioned in a former chapter, on a course of watching and fasting, preparatory to his being enrolled among the band of warriors, according to the usages of

his nation. Had he been in the camp when the attack of the Osages was made, there is little doubt that his last drop of blood would have there been shed before the lodge of Tamenund, but he had retired to a distance, whence the war cry and the tumult of the fight never reached his ear, and had concluded his self-denying probation with a dream of happy omen; a dream that promised future glory, dear to every ambitious Indian spirit, and in which the triumphs of war were wildly and confusedly blended with the sisterly tones of Oli-tipa's voice, and the sweet smile of the Lily of Mooshanne.

Inspired by his vision, the ardent boy returned in high hope and spirits towards the encampment, but when he gained the summit of a hill which overlooked it, a single glance sufficed to show him the destruction that had been wrought during his absence; he saw that the lodges were overthrown, the horses driven off, and that the inhabitants of the moving village were either dispersed or destroyed. Rooted to the spot, he looked on the scene in speechless horror, when all at once his attention was caught by a body of men moving over a distant height in the western horizon, their figures being rendered visible by the deep red background afforded by the setting sun: swift as thought the youth darted off in pursuit.

After the shades of night had fallen, the re-

treating party halted, posted their sentries, lit their camp-fires, and knowing that nothing was to be feared from an enemy so lately and so totally overthrown, they cooked their meat and their maize, and smoked their pipes, with the lazy indifference habitual to Indian warriors when the excitement of the chase or the fight has subsided. In the centre of the camp rose a white tent, and beside it a kind of temporary arbour had been hastily constructed from reeds and alder-boughs; beneath the latter reclined the gigantic form of Mahéga, stretched at his length and puffing out volumes of *kinnekenik** smoke, with the self-satisfied complacency of success.

Within the tent sat Prairie-bird, her eyes meekly raised to heaven, her hands crossed upon her bosom, and a small basket of corn-cakes being placed, untasted, upon the ground beside her; at a little distance, in the corner of the tent, sate her female Indian attendant, whom Mahéga had permitted, with a delicacy and consideration scarcely to be expected from him, to share her mistress's captivity. He had also given orders that all the lighter articles belonging to her toilet, and to the furniture of her tent, should be conveyed with the

* A mixture used for smoking by the Indians of the Missouri; it is usually composed of tobacco, dried sumach-leaf, and the inner bark of the white willow, cut small and mixed in nearly equal proportions.

latter, so that as yet both her privacy and her comfort had been faithfully secured.

Guided by the fires, Wingenund, who had followed with unabated speed, had no difficulty in finding the Osage encampment; neither was his intelligent mind at a loss to apprehend what had occurred; he had long known the views and plans entertained by Mahéga respecting Prairie-bird, and when, from a distant eminence he caught a sight of her white tent pitched in the centre of a retreating Indian band, he understood in a moment her present situation, and the disastrous events that had preceded it; although he believed that both War-Eagle and Reginald must have fallen ere his sister had been made a captive, he resolved at all hazards to communicate with her, and either to rescue her or die in the attempt.

Having been so long encamped with the Osages, he was tolerably well versed in their language, and he also knew so well the general disposition of their outposts that he had no doubt of being able to steal into their camp. As soon as he had gained, undiscovered, the shelter of a clump of alders, only a few bowshots distant from the nearest fire, he stripped off and concealed his hunting shirt, cap, leggins, and other accoutrements, retaining only his belt, in which he hid a small pocket-pistol, lately given to him by Reginald, and his scalp-knife, sheathed in a case of

bison-hide. Thus slightly armed, he threw himself upon the grass, and commenced creeping like a serpent towards the Osage encampment.

Unlike the sentries of civilized armies, those of the North American Indians frequently sit at their appointed station, and trust to their extraordinary quickness of sight and hearing to guard them against surprise. Ere he had crept many yards, Wingenund found himself near an Indian, seated with his back against the decayed stump of a tree, and whiling away his watch by humming a low and melancholy Osage air; fortunately, the night was dark, and the heavy dew had so softened the grass, that the boy's pliant and elastic form wound its onward way without the slightest noise being made to alarm the lazy sentinel. Having passed this out-post in safety, he continued his snaky progress, occasionally raising his head to glance his quick eye around and observe the nature of the obstacles that he had yet to encounter; these were less than he expected, and he contrived at length to trail himself to the back of Olitipa's tent, where he ensconced himself unperceived under cover of a large buffalo skin, which was loosely thrown over her saddle to protect it from the weather. His first object was to scoop out a few inches of the turf below the edge of the tent, in order that he might conveniently hear or be heard by her without raising his voice above the lowest whisper.

After listening attentively for a few minutes, a gentle and regular breathing informed him that one sleeper was within; but Wingenund, whose sharp eyes had already observed that there were two saddles under the buffalo robe which covered him, conjectured that her attendant was now her companion in captivity, and that the grief and anxiety of Olitipa had probably banished slumber from her eyes. To resolve these doubts, and to effect the purpose of his dangerous attempt, he now applied his mouth to the small opening that he had made at the back of the tent, and gave a low and almost inaudible sound from his lips like the chirping of a cricket. Low as it was, the sound escaped not the quick ear of Olitipa, who turned and listened more intently,—again it was repeated, and the maiden felt a sudden tremour of anxiety pervade her whole frame, as from an instinctive consciousness that the sound was a signal intended for her ear.

Immediately in front of the lodge were stretched the bulky forms of two half slumbering Osages. She knew that the dreaded Mahéga was only a few paces distant, and that if some friend were indeed near, the least indiscretion on her part might draw down upon him certain destruction; but she was courageous by nature, and habit had given her presence of mind. Being aware that few, if any of her captors spoke the English tongue,

she said, in a low, but distinct voice, "If a friend is near, let me hear the signal again?"

Immediately the cricket-chirrup was repeated. Convinced now beyond a doubt that friendly succour was nigh, the maiden's heart throbbed with hope, fear, and many contending emotions, but she lost not her self-possession; and having now ascertained the spot whence the sound proceeded, she moved the skins which formed her couch to that part of the tent, and was thus enabled to rest her head within a few inches of the opening made by Wingenund below the canvass.

"Prairie-bird," whispered a soft voice close to her ear, a voice that she had a thousand times taught to pronounce her name, and every accent of which was familiar to her ear.

"My brother!" was the low-breathed reply.

"If the Washache do not hear, let my sister tell all, in few words."

As Prairie-bird briefly described the events above-narrated, Wingenund found some comfort in the reflection that War-Eagle, Reginald, and their band had escaped the destruction which had overwhelmed the Lenapé village: when she concluded, he replied,

"It is enough, let my sister hope; let her speak fair words to Mahéga—Wingenund will find his brothers, they will follow the trail, my sister must not be afraid; many days and nights may pass,



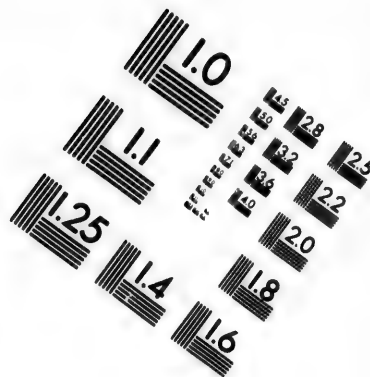
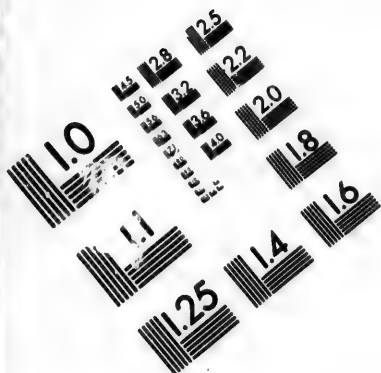
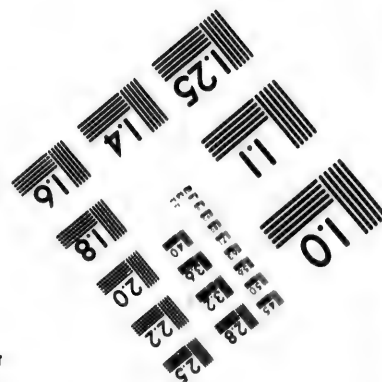
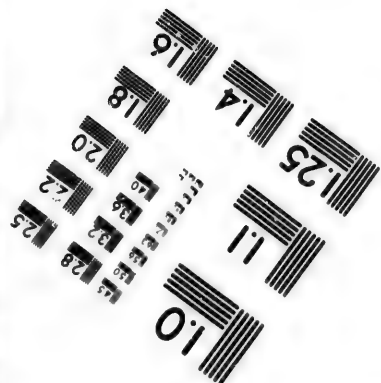
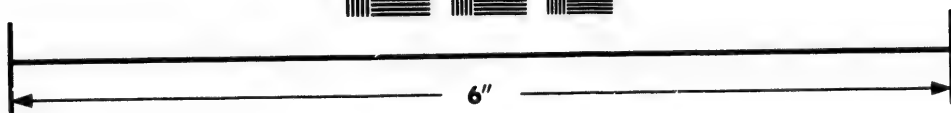
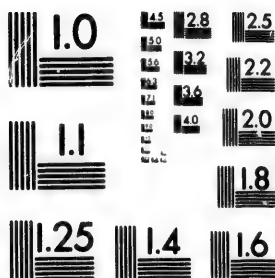


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but the Lenapé will be near her, and Netis will be with them. Wingenund must go."

How fain was Prairie-bird to ask him a thousand questions, to give him a thousand cautions, and to send as many messages by him to her lover! but, trained in the severe school of Indian discipline, she knew that every word spoken or whispered increased the danger already incurred by Wingenund, and in obedience to his hint she contented herself with silently invoking the blessing of Heaven on the promised attempt to be made by himself and his beloved coadjutors, for her rescue.

"That pale-faced maiden speaks to herself all through the night," said one of the Osage warriors to his comrade stretched beside him before the tent.

"I heard a sort of murmuring sound," replied the other; "but I shut my ears. Mahéga says that her words are like the voices of spirits; it is not good to listen! Before this moon is older I will ask her to curse Pâketshu, that Pawnee wolf who killed my two brothers near the Nebraske."*

* The Indians believe that some persons have the power of injuring, or even of killing others at a distance of many hundred miles, by charms and spells: this belief in witchcraft is constantly noticed by Tanner and others, who have resided long among the Indians, and it seems to have been especially prevalent among the Oggibeways and other northern tribes. In illustration of a similar notion in the eastern hemisphere, see Borrow's *Zincali*, or the Gypsies of Spain, vol. i. chap. ix. on the Evil Eye.

Profiting by this brief dialogue, Wingenund crept from under the buffalo skin, and looking carefully around to see whether any new change had taken place since his concealment, he found that several of the Osage warriors, who had been probably eating together, were now stretched around the tent, and it was hopeless to attempt passing so many cunning and vigilant foes undiscovered. While he was meditating on the best course to be pursued, his attention was called to a noise immediately in front of the tent, which was caused by the horse ridden by Olitipa having broken from its tether and entangled its legs in the halter. Springing on his feet, Wingenund seized the leather-thong, using at the same time the expressions common among the Osages for quieting a fractious horse.

"What is it?" exclaimed at once several of the warriors, half raising themselves from their recumbent posture.

"Nothing," replied Wingenund, in their own tongue; "the pale-faced squaw's horse has got loose."

So saying he stooped leisurely down, and fastened the laryette again to the iron pin, from which it had been detached. Having secured the horse, he stood up again, and stepped coolly over several of the Osages stretched around the tent; and they, naturally mistaking him for one of their own party,

composed themselves again to sleep. Thus he passed through the encampment, when he again threw himself upon the ground, and again succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the outposts, and in reaching safely the covert where he had left his rifle and his accoutrements.

The active spirit of Wingenund was not yet wearied of exertion. Seeing that the course taken by the Osages was westerly, he went forward in that direction, and having ascended an elevated height commanding a view of the adjoining valleys, he concealed himself with the intention of watching the enemy's march.

On the following morning the Osages started at daybreak, and marched until noon, when Mahéga halted them, and put in execution the plan that he had formed for throwing off any pursuit that might be attempted. He had brought four horses from the Delaware encampment; of these he retained two for the use of Prairie-bird and her attendant, and ordered their hoofs to be covered with thick wrappers of bison hide;* he selected also ten of the warriors, on whose courage and fidelity he could best depend; the remainder of the band he dis-

* This method of baffling pursuit is not unfrequently resorted to by the Indian marauders. The reader of Shakespeare (and who that can read is not ?) will remember Lear's—

“It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
A troop of horse with felt !”

missed, under the conduct of Flying-arrow, with the remaining two horses laden with a portion of the Delaware spoils and trophies, desiring them to strike off to the northward, and making a trail as distinct as possible, to return by a circuitous march to the Osage village. These orders were punctually obeyed, and Mahéga, having seen the larger moiety of his band start on their appointed route, led off his own small party in a south-westerly direction, through the hardest and roughest surface that the prairie afforded, where he rightly judged that their trail could with difficulty be followed, even by the lynx-eyed chief of the Delawares.

• From his concealment in the distance, Wing-nund observed the whole manœuvre; and having carefully noted the very spot where the two trails separated, he ran back to the deserted Lenape village to carry out the plan that he had formed for the pursuit. On his way he gathered a score of pliant willow rods, and these lay at his feet when he stood in the attitude of deep meditation, described at the commencement of this chapter. He knew that if War-Eagle and his party returned in safety from their expedition, their steps would be directed at once to the spot on which he now stood, and his first care was to convey to them all the information necessary for their guidance. This he was enabled to do by marking with his knife on slices of elm bark various figures and designs,

which War-Eagle would easily understand. To describe these at length would be tedious, in a narrative such as the present; all readers who know anything of the history of the North-American Indians being aware of their sagacity in the use of these rude hieroglyphics; it is sufficient here to state, that Wingenund was able to express, in a manner intelligible to his kinsman, that he himself marked the elm-bark, that Olitipa was prisoner to Mahéga, that the Osage trail was to the west; that it divided, the broad trail to the north being the wrong one; and that he would hang on the right one and make more marks for War-Eagle to follow.

Having carefully noted these particulars, he stuck one of his rods into the ground and fastened to the top of it his roll of elm-bark; then giving one more melancholy glance at the desolate scene around him, he gathered up his willow twigs, and throwing himself again upon the Osage trail, never rested his weary limbs until the burnt grass, upon a spot where the party had cooked some bison-meat, assured him that he was on their track; then he laid himself under a neighbouring bush and slept soundly, trusting to his own sagacity for following the trail over the boundless prairie before him.

While these events were passing on the Missouri Prairie, Paul Müller having been escorted to the settlements and set free by the Osages,

pursued his way towards St. Louis, then the nucleus of Western trade, and the point whence all expeditions, whether of a warlike or commercial nature, were carried on in that region. He was walking slowly forward, revolving in his mind the melancholy changes that had taken place in the course of the last few weeks, the destruction of the Lenape band, and the captivity of his beloved pupil, when he was overtaken by a sturdy and weatherbeaten pedestrian, whose person and attire seemed to have been roughly handled of late, for his left arm was in a sling, various patches of plaister were on his face and forehead, his leggins were torn to rags, and the barrel of a rifle broken off from the stock was slung over his shoulder.

The Missionary, turning round to greet his fellow-traveller with his accustomed courtesy, encountered a countenance, which, notwithstanding its condition, he recognised as one that he had seen in the Delaware village.

"Bearskin, my good friend," said he, holding out his hand, and grasping heartily the horny fist of the voyageur, "I am right glad to see you, although it seems that you have received some severe hurts; I feared you had fallen among the other victims of that terrible day."

"I can't deny that the day was rough enough," replied Bearskin, looking down upon his wounded arm; "and the redskin devils left only one other

of my party besides myself alive; we contrived to beat off those who attacked our quarter, but when we found that Mahéga had broken in upon the rear, and had killed Mike Smith and his men, we made the best of our way to the woods; several were shot and scalped, two of us escaped; I received, as you see, a few ugly scratches, but my old carcass is accustomed to being battered, and a week will set it all to rights."

"You know," replied the Missionary, "that I have some skill in curing wounds. When we reach St. Louis we will take up our lodging in the same house, and I will do what I can to relieve your hurts. Moreover, there are many things on which I wish to speak with you at leisure, and I have friends there who will supply us with all that is needful for our comfort."

While they were thus conversing, the tall spires of the cathedral became visible over the forest, which then grew dense and unbroken to the very edge of the town, and in a few minutes Bearskin, conducted by the Missionary was snugly lodged in the dwelling of one of the wealthiest peltry-dealers in the famous frontier city of St. Louis.

CHAPTER X.

AN AMBUSCADE.—REGINALD BRANDON FINDS HIS HORSE, AND
M. PERROT NEARLY LOSES HIS HEAD.—WHILE INDIAN PHI-
LOSOPHY IS DISPLAYED IN ONE QUARTER, INDIAN CREDULITY
IS EXHIBITED IN ANOTHER.

WE left War-Eagle and his party posted in a thicket of considerable extent, in the centre of a valley through which he had calculated that the marauding band of Sioux would return with the captured horses to their village; long and anxiously did he wait in expectation of their appearance; and both himself and Reginald began to fear that they must have taken some other route, when they saw at a distance an Indian, galloping down the valley towards them; as he drew near, the head-dress of eagle's feathers, the scalplocks on his leather hunting shirt, and the fringes by which his leggins were adorned, announced him to the practised eye of the young Delaware chief, as a Dahcotah brave of some distinction; but what was the astonishment of Reginald, at recognizing in the fiery steed that bore him, his own lost Nekimi. By an unconscious movement he threw forward his rifle over the log which concealed

him, and was preparing to secure a certain aim, when War-Eagle, touching his arm, whispered, "Netis not shoot, more Dahcots are coming, —noise of gun not good here, Netis have enough fight soon,—leave this man to War-Eagle, he give Netis back his horse."

Reginald, although disappointed at not being allowed to take vengeance on the approaching savage, saw the prudence of his friend's counsel, and suffering himself to be guided by it, waited patiently to see how the Delaware proposed to act. The latter, laying aside his rifle, and armed only with his scalp-knife and tomahawk, crept to a thick bush on the edge of the broad trail passing through the centre of the thicket; in his hand he took a worn-out mocassin, which he threw carelessly upon the track, and then ensconced himself in the hiding-place which he had selected for his purpose. The Dahcota warrior, who had been sent forward by his chief to reconnoitre, and to whom Nekimi had been lent on account of the extraordinary speed which that animal had been found to possess, slackened his speed as he entered the thicket, and cast his wary eyes to the right and to the left, glancing occasionally at the sides of the hills which overhung the valley.

The Delawares were too well concealed to be seen from the path, and he rode slowly forward until he came to the spot where lay the mocassin thrown down by War-Eagle.

"Ha!" said the Sioux, uttering a hasty ejaculation, and leaping from his horse to examine its fashion. As he stooped to pick it up War-Eagle sprung like a tiger upon him, and with a single blow of his tomahawk laid the unfortunate warrior dead at his feet. Throwing Nekimi's bridle over his arm, he drew the body into the adjacent thicket, and, having found in the waistband the small leathern bag in which the Indians of the Missouri usually carry the different coloured clays wherewith they paint themselves, he proceeded to transform himself into a Sioux. Putting on the Dahcotah head-dress and other apparel, aided by one of the most experienced of his band, he disguised himself in a few minutes so effectually that, unless upon a very close inspection, he might well be taken for the Indian whom he had just killed.

As soon as this operation was completed, he desired Reginald and the rest of the party to remain concealed, and if he succeeded in luring the enemy to the spot, on no account to fire until their main body had reached the bush from which he had sprung on the Sioux. Having given this instruction, he vaulted on Nekimi's back, and returned at speed to the upper part of the valley, from which direction he knew that the Dahcotahs must be approaching. He had not ridden many miles ere he saw them advancing

at a leisurely rate, partly driving before them, and partly leading, the horses stolen from the Delawares. This was an occasion on which War-Eagle required all his sagacity and presence of mind, for should he betray himself by a false movement or gesture, not only would the enemy escape the snare laid for them, but his life would pay the forfeit of his temerity. Wheeling his horse about, he returned towards the thicket, and, after riding to and fro, as if making a careful investigation of its paths and foot-marks, he went back to the broad trail, and as soon as the foremost of the Dahcotahs were within a couple of hundred yards, he made the signal "All right,"* and rode gently forward through the wood. So well did his party observe the orders which he had given them, that, although he knew the exact spot where they were posted, and scanned it with the most searching glance of his keen eye, not a vestige of a human figure,

* One of the most extraordinary specimens of the ingenuity of the tribes who inhabit the Great Missouri wilderness, and who speak many languages, so different that they can have with each other no verbal communication, is the language of Signs, common to them all, by which Pawnees, Dahcotahs, Osages, Black-feet, Upsarokas, or the Crows and other Western nations, can understand each other quite sufficiently for the ordinary purposes of their simple life. The sign for "all right" is made by holding the hand with the palm downwards, in a horizontal position, and waving it slowly outwards.

nor of a weapon could he detect, and a smile of triumph curled his lip as he felt assured of the success of his plan. No sooner had he passed the bush where the Dahcotah had fallen, than he turned aside into the thicket, and, having fastened Nekimi securely to a tree, tore off his Sioux disguise, and resuming his own dress and rifle, concealed himself on the flank of his party.

The Dahcotahs, who had, as they thought, seen their scout make the sign of "All right," after a careful examination of the wood, entered it without either order or suspicion; neither did they discover their mistake until the foremost reached the fatal bush, when a volley from the ambuscade told among them with terrible effect. Several of the Sioux fell at this first discharge, and the confusion caused by this unexpected attack was increased by the panic among the horses, some of which being frightened, and others wounded, they reared and plunged with ungovernable fury.

Although taken by surprise, the Dahcotah warriors behaved with determined courage; throwing themselves from their horses, they dashed into the thicket to dislodge their unseen foes, and the fight became general, as well as desultory, each man using a log or a tree for his own defence, and shooting, either with rifle or bow, at any adversary whom he could see for a moment exposed. The Sioux, though more numerous, were

unprovided with efficient fire-arms; and sensible of the advantages thence arising to their opponents, they made desperate, and not unsuccessful efforts to bring the fight to close quarters; Reginald and War-Eagle were side by side, each endeavouring to outdo the other in feats of gallantry, and at the same time to watch over the safety of his friend.

Monsieur Perrot caught the general spirit of the affray, and, as he afterwards said of himself, "fought like a famished lion!" when, unluckily, his pistol snapped in the face of a Sioux warrior, who struck him a blow that felled him to the earth. Stepping lightly over the form of his prostrate foe, the savage, grasping a knife in his right hand, and seizing the luckless Frenchman's hair with his left, was about to scalp him, when the knife dropped from his hand, and he stood for a moment petrified with astonishment and horror. The whole head of hair was in his left hand, and the white man sat grinning before him with a smooth and shaven crown.

Letting fall what he believed to be the scalp of some devil in human shape, the affrighted Sioux fled from the spot, while Perrot, replacing his wig, muttered half aloud, "*Bravo! ma bonne perruque! je te dois mille remerçimens!*"

At this crisis, while the issue of the general combat was still doubtful, the sound of a bugle

was heard in the distance, and the signal immediately answered by Reginald, who shouted aloud to War-Eagle, that Grande-Hâche was at hand. Inspired by the knowledge of approaching reinforcement, the Delawares fought with renewed confidence, while the Dahcotahs, startled by the strange and unknown bugle calls, were proportionately confused and thrown into disorder. The panic among them was complete when the sharp crack of Baptiste's rifle was heard in the rear, and one of their principal braves fell dead at the root of the tree which sheltered him from the fire of War-Eagle's party. Hemmed in between the two hostile bands, the Sioux now gave up all hope of concealment, and fought with the courage of despair; but the resistance which they offered was neither effective nor of long duration. Baptiste, wielding his terrible axe, seemed resolved this day to wreak his fierce and long-delayed vengeance on the tribe at whose hands he had sustained such deadly injury; and regardless of several slight wounds which he received in the fray, continued to deal destruction among all who came within reach. Nor were Reginald and War-Eagle less active in the fight; the struggle was hand to hand; the Sioux seeming to expect no quarter, and being determined to fight while they could wield a knife or tomahawk.

Their chief, a man of stature almost as power-

ful as that of Mahéga, seemed gifted with a charmed life, for although he exposed himself freely to the boldest of his opponents, animating his men by shouting aloud the terrible war-cry of the Dahcotahs,* and rushing to their aid wherever he found them giving way, he was hitherto unhurt, and bent every effort to destroy War-Eagle, whom he easily recognised as the leader, and most formidable of the Delawares. An opportunity soon offered itself, as War-Eagle was engaged with another of the Dahcotahs. The chief aimed at his unguarded head a blow that must have proved fatal, had not Reginald warded it off with his cutlass; the Indian turned furiously upon him, and a fierce combat ensued, but it was not of long duration, for after they had exchanged a few strokes, a successful thrust stretched the Dahcotah chief upon the ground. An exulting cry burst from the Delawares, and the panic-struck Sioux fled in every direction. The pursuit was conducted with the merciless eagerness common to Indian warfare, and as Reginald felt no inclination to join in it, he returned his cutlass to its sheath, and busied himself in securing all the horses that came within his reach.

* It is well known that every tribe has its separate war-cry; that of the Dahcotah's resembles the short angry bark of a dog, but they utter it with a piercing shrillness that renders it terrific in the extreme.

One by one the Delawares came back to the place of rendezvous, some bearing with them the scalps which they had taken, others leading recaptured horses, and all in the highest excitement of triumph.

War-Eagle set free Nekimi, and led it towards its master. As soon as it was near enough to hear his voice, Reginald called to the noble animal, which shaking its flowing mane, came bounding and snorting towards him. He caressed it for a short time, then vaulted upon its back, and was delighted to find that its spirit and strength had suffered no diminution since its capture. Again he dismounted, and Nekimi followed him unled, playing round him like a favorite dog. While he thus amused himself with his recovered steed, Baptiste sat by the side of a small streamlet, cleaning his axe and his rifle, and listening with a grim smile to Monsieur Perrot's account of the danger from which he had been saved by his peruke. In the midst of his narrative seeing some blood on the sleeve of his companion's shirt, he said, "Baptiste, you are surely wounded?"

"Yes," replied the other; "one of the red-skins gave me a smartish stroke with a knife in that skirmish—however, I forgive him, as I paid him for it."

"But would it not be better to attend to your wound first, and to your weapons afterwards?"

"Why, no, Monsieur Perrot, that isn't our fashion in the woods; I like first to make the doctor ready for service, and then it will be time enough to put a little cold water and a bandage to the cut."

The good-humoured Frenchman insisted upon his proposal, but had some difficulty in persuading the rough Guide to let him dress the wound, which, though deep and painful, was not dangerous.

On the following day War-Eagle returned with his triumphant party, and with the rescued horses towards the Delaware village, every bosom, save one, beating high with exultation. Reginald could scarcely control his impatience to relate to Prairie-bird the events of the successful expedition. The young warriors anticipated with joy the beaming smiles with which they would be welcomed by the Lenape maidens; while those of maturer age looked forward to the well-merited applause of their chiefs, and the fierce excitement of the war-dance with which their victory would be celebrated. Baptiste had satiated his long-cherished vengeance on the tribe which had destroyed his parents, and Monsieur Perrot prepared many jokes and gibes, which he proposed to inflict upon Mike Smith, and those who had not partaken in the glory which he and his party had gained.

War-Eagle alone shared not in the general joy! Whether it was that he could not prevent his

thoughts from reverting to Prairie-bird, or that he was oppressed by a vague and mysterious presentiment of calamity, his demeanour was grave, even to sadness, and the trophies of victory hung neglected from the fringes of his dress.

Having taken the shortest route, they arrived, a few hours before night-fall, at a point where a broad trail led direct to the encampment; and War-Eagle, whose penetrating eye had marked his friend's impatience, and who never lost an opportunity of proving to him the warmth of his attachment, said to him,

"Netis should go forward and tell Temenund and the chiefs, that the Lenape war-party are coming, and that the Dahcotah scalps are many. It will be a pleasant tale for the ancient chiefs, and it is good that they hear it from the mouth of the bravest warrior."

This compliment was paid to him aloud, and in the hearing of the whole band, who signified their approbation by the usual quick and repeated exclamation.*

Reginald replied, "No one is bravest here;

* This exclamation resembles the English word "How-how," repeated with a strong aspirate and great rapidity. It seems common to all Indian nations, for the author has heard it used by many different tribes, and it is mentioned by Charlevoix as being constantly uttered by the Natchez, Illinois, and other Indian nations, then dwelling near the banks of the Mississippi.

where War-Eagle leads, none but brave men are worthy to follow."

The next minute Nekimi was in full speed towards the village ; and the Delaware band, with Baptiste and Perrot, moved leisurely forward after him.

Scarcely two hours had elapsed when a single horseman was seen riding towards them, in whom, as he drew near, they had some difficulty in recognizing Reginald, for his dress was soiled, his countenance haggard and horror-stricken, while the foaming sides and wide-dilated nostril of Nekimi shewed that he had been riding with frantic and furious speed. All made way for him, and he spoke to none until he drew his bridle by the side of War-Eagle, and beckoned to him and to Baptiste to come aside. For a moment he looked at the former in silence with an eye so troubled, that the Guide feared that some dreadful accident had unsettled his young master's mind, but that fear was almost immediately relieved by Reginald, who, taking his friend's hand, said to him, in a voice almost inarticulate from suppressed emotion,

"I bring you, War-Eagle, dreadful—dreadful news."

"War-Eagle knows that the sun does not always shine," was the calm reply.

"But this is darkness," said Reginald, shudder-

ing; "black darkness, where there is neither sun nor moon, not even a star!"

"My brother," said the Indian, drawing himself proudly to his full height; "my brother speaks without thinking. The sun shines still, and the stars are bright in their place. The Great Spirit dwells always among them; a thick cloud may hide them from our eyes, but my brother knows they are shining as brightly as ever."

The young man looked with wonder and awe upon the lofty countenance of this untaught philosopher of the wilderness; and he replied, "War-Eagle is right. The Great Spirit sees all, and whatever he does is good! But sometimes the cup of misfortune is so full and so bitter, that man can hardly drink it and live."

"Let Netis speak all and conceal nothing," said the chief: "what has he seen at the village?"

"*There is no village!*" said the young man in an agony of grief. "The lodges are overthrown; Tamenund, the Black Father, Olitipa, all are gone! wolves and vultures are quarrelling over the bones of unburied Lenapé!"

As Reginald concluded his tragic narrative, an attentive observer might have seen that the muscles and nerves in the powerful frame of the Indian contracted for an instant, but no change was visible on his haughty and commanding brow, as he stood before the bearer of this dreadful news

a living impersonation of the stern and stoic philosophy of his race.

"War-Eagle," said Reginald, "can you explain this calamity—do you see through it—how has it happened?"

"*Mahéga*," was the brief and emphatic reply.

"Do you believe that the monster has murdered all, men, women and children?" said Reginald, whose thoughts were fixed on Prairie-bird, but whose lips refused to pronounce her name.

"No," replied the chief; "not all, the life of Olitipa is safe, if she becomes the wife of that wolf; for the others, War-Eagle cannot tell. The Washashe love to take scalps, woman, child or warrior, it is all one to them; it is enough. War-Eagle must speak to his people."

After a minute's interval, the chief accordingly summoned his faithful band around him, and in brief but pathetic language informed them of the disaster that had befallen their tribe. Reginald could not listen unmoved to the piercing cries and groans with which the Delawares rent the air on receiving this intelligence, although his own heart was racked with anxiety concerning the fate of his beloved Prairie-bird. While the surrounding warriors thus gave unrestrained vent to their lamentations, War-Eagle stood like some antique statue of bronze, in an attitude of haughty repose, his broad chest thrown forward and his erect front,

bearing the impress of an unconquerable will, bidding defiance alike to the human weakness that might assail from within, and the storms of fate that might threaten from without. The stern and impressive silence of his grief produced, ere long, its effect upon his followers ; by degrees the sounds of wailing died away, and as the short twilight of that climate was rapidly merging into darkness, the chief, taking Reginald's arm, moved forward, whispering to him in a tone, the deep and gloomy meaning of which haunted his memory long afterwards,

"The spirit of Tamenund calls to War-Eagle and asks 'Where is Mahéga?'"

On the following morning War-Eagle rose an hour before daybreak, and led his party to the spot where the lodges of their kindred had so lately stood, and where they had anticipated a reception of honour and triumph. The chief strode forward across the desolate scene, seemingly insensible to its horrors ; faithful to his determination, all the energies of his nature were concentrated in the burning thirst for revenge, which expelled, for the time, every other feeling from his breast. The Delaware warriors, observant of the stern demeanour of their leader, followed him in gloomy silence ; and although each shuddered as he passed the well-known spot where, only a few days before, an anxious wife had prepared his food, and merry

children had prattled round his knee, not a groan nor a complaint was uttered; but every bosom throbbed under the expectation of a vengeance so terrible, that it should be remembered by the Osages to the latest hour of their existence as a tribe.

War-Eagle moved directly forward to the place where the lodge of Tamenund and the tent of the Prairie-bird had been pitched. As they approached it Reginald felt his heart faint within him, and the colour fled from his cheek and lip.

Baptiste, taking his master's hand, said to him, in a tone of voice the habitual roughness of which was softened by genuine sympathy, "Master Reginald, remember where you are; the eyes of the Lenapé are upon the adopted brother of their chief; they have lost fathers, brothers, wives, and children; see how they bear their loss, let them not think Netis less brave than themselves."

"Thank you, thank you, honest Baptiste," said the unhappy young man, wringing the woodman's horny hand; "I will neither disgrace my own, nor my adopted name; but who among them can compare his loss with mine! so young, so fair, so gentle, my own affianced bride, pledged to me under the eye of heaven, and now in the hands of that fierce and merciless villain."

At this moment a cry of exultation burst from the lips of War-Eagle, as his eye fell upon the

wand and slips of bark left by Wingenund. One by one the chief examined them, and deciphering their meaning with rapid and unerring sagacity, communicated to his friend that the youth was still alive and free; that Olitipa, though a prisoner, was well, and that a fine trail was open for them to follow.

"Let us start upon it this instant," cried Reginald, with the re-awakened impetuosity of his nature.

"War-Eagle must take much counsel with himself," replied the chief, gravely. "The ancient men of the Lenapé are asleep, their bones are uncovered; War-Eagle must not forget them; but," he added, while a terrible fire shot from his dark eye, "if the Great Spirit grants him life, he will bring Netis within reach of Mahéga before this young moon's horn becomes a circle."

Having thus spoken, he resumed his scrutiny of the ciphers and figures drawn upon the bark; nor did he cease it until he fully understood their purport; he then called together his band, and explained to them his further plans, which were briefly these:—

He selected ten of the youngest and most active, who were to accompany him, with Reginald, Baptiste, and Perrot, on the trail of Mahéga; the remainder of the party, under the guidance of an experienced brave, were to follow the more nu-

merous body of the Osages, to hang on their trail, and never to leave it while there remained a chance or a hope of an enemy's scalp. Two of the Delawares were at the same time despatched, one to seek the aid and sympathy of the Kansas and other friendly, or neutral tribes, the other to prowls about the woods in the neighbourhood, to collect any fugitives who might have escaped, and guide any party that might be formed, to aid in the meditated pursuit. He also ordered the larger party to gather the bones and relics of their kindred, and to perform the rites of sepulture, according to the custom of the tribe.

While the chief was giving these instructions to the several parties above designated, Reginald sat musing on the very grass over which the tent of his beloved had been spread; no blood had there been spilt; it had been spared the desecration of the vulture and the wolf; her spirit seemed to hover unseen over the spot; and shutting his eyes, the lover fancied he could still hear her sweet voice, attuned to the simple accompaniment of her Mexican guitar.

How long this waking dream possessed his senses he knew not, but he was awakened from it by War-Eagle, who whispered in his ear, "The trail of Mahéga waits for my brother." Ashamed of his temporary weakness, Reginald sprung to his feet, and thence upon the back of Nekimi. The

chief having chosen four of the strongest and best from the recaptured horses, one for the use of Perrot, the others for such emergencies as might occur, left the remainder with the main body of the Delawares, and, accompanied by his small party thoroughly well armed and equipped, started on the trail in pursuit of the Osages.

While these events were passing near the site of the Lenapé village, Mahéga pursued his westward course with unremitting activity, for although he felt little apprehension from the broken and dispirited band of Delawares, he knew that he was entering a region which was the hunting-ground of the Pawnees, Otoes, Ioways, and other tribes, all of whom would consider him a trespasser, and would be disposed to view his present expedition in the light of a hostile incursion; for this reason, although he was amply provided with presents for such Indians as he might fall in with, from the plunder of the Delaware lodges, he marched with the greatest rapidity and caution, and never relaxed his speed until he had passed that dangerous region, and had entered upon the higher, and, comparatively, less frequented plain, lying between the waters of the Nebraska, or Platte River, and the lower ridges, known by the name of the Spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

During the whole of this tedious march the

attention paid to the comfort of Olitipa by her wild and wayward captor was constant and respectful; secure, as he thought, from pursuit, he had determined to gain her confidence and affection, and thus to share in that mysterious knowledge and power which he believed her to possess, and which he well knew that force or harshness would never induce her to impart. Thus she remained continually attended by her favourite Lita; when the band halted for refreshment, the choicest morsels were set apart for her use, and the young branches of the willow or poplar were gathered to shelter her from the sun. Mahéga rarely addressed her, but when he did so it was in language calculated to dispel all apprehension of present injury or insult; and the Prairie-bird, remembering the parting council of the Missionary, replied to the haughty chief's inquiries with courtesy and gentleness; although she could not help shuddering when she remembered his former violence, and the dreadful massacre at the Delaware village, she felt deeply grateful to Heaven for having softened the tiger's heart towards her, and for having led him, by means and motives unknown to herself, to consult her safety and her comfort.

On one occasion during the march, Mahéga availed himself of her mysterious acquirements, in a manner that reflected great credit upon his saga-

city, at the same time that it increased, in a tenfold degree, the awe with which she had inspired him and his adherents. They had made their usual halt at noon, by the side of a small stream; Prairie-bird and her faithful Lita were sheltered from the burning rays of the sun by an arbour of alder-branches, which the Osages had hastily but not inconveniently, constructed; Mahéga and his warriors being occupied in eating the dainty morsels of meat afforded by a young buffalo cow killed on the preceding day, when a large band of Indians appeared on the brow of a neighbouring hill, and came down at full speed towards the Osage encampment. Mahéga, without manifesting any uneasiness, desired his men to pile a few of their most valuable packages within the arbour of Olitipa, and to form themselves in a semicircle around, for its protection, their bows and rifles being ready for immediate use. Having made these dispositions, he waited the approach of the strangers, quietly cutting his buffalo beef and eating it as if secure of their friendly intentions. Having come within a hundred yards, they drew in their bridles on a signal from their leader, who seemed disposed to take a more deliberate survey of the party. From their appearance Mahéga knew that they must belong to one of the wild roving tribes who hunt between the sources of the Platte and Arkansas rivers, but the name or

designation of their tribe he was at first unable to make out. Their weapons were bows and arrows, short clubs, and knives; their dress, a hunting-shirt of half-dressed skin, a centre-cloth of the same material, and mocassins on their feet, leaving the legs entirely bare; the leader had long hair, clubbed at the back of his head, and fastened with sinew-strings round a wooden pin, to which were attached several stained feathers, which danced in the wind, and heightened the picturesque effect of his costume.

A rapid glance sufficed to show him that the new comers, although apparently busied about their meal without distrust, were not only well armed, but ready for immediate service; nor did his eye fail to note the martial bearing and gigantic proportions of Mahéga, who sat like a chief expecting the approach of an inferior.

Influenced by these observations, the leader of the roving band resolved that the first intercourse at least, should be of a peaceful nature, prudently reflecting, that as his own numbers were far superior, the nearer the quarters the greater would be their advantage. Having uttered a few brief words to his followers, he advanced with a friendly gesture towards Mahéga, and the following dialogue took place, in the ingenious language of signs before referred to:—

Mahéga.—"What tribe are you?"

Leader.—"Ari-ca-rá.* What are you, and whither going?"

M.—"Washashe, going to the mountains."

L.—"What seek you there?"

M.—"Beaver, otter, and grisly bear-skins."

L.—"Good. What is in the green-branch-wigwam."

M.—"Great Medicine—let the Aricará beware." To this the chief added the sign usually employed for their most solemn mysteries.

While this conversation was going on, the rovers of the wilderness had gradually drawn nearer, not, however, unperceived by Mahéga, who, throwing down a strip of blanket at a distance of twenty yards from the arbour of Prairie-bird, explained by a sign sufficiently intelligible, that if the main body of them crossed that line his party would shoot.

At a signal from their leader they again halted; and Mahéga observed that from time to time they threw hasty glances over the hill whence they had come, from which he inferred that more of their tribe were in the immediate neighbourhood.

Meanwhile their leader, whose curiosity urged

* Aricará. This tribe is by descent a branch of the great Pawnee nation, to whose language their own still bears a close resemblance; they are usually known among western travelers by the name of Riccarees, and the French call them "Les Ris;" they are a very predatory, wild, and thievish race.

him to discover what Great Medicine was contained in the arbour, advanced fearlessly alone within the forbidden precincts, thus placing his own life at the mercy of the Osages.

Ordering his men to keep a strict watch on the movements of the Aricarás, and to shoot the first whom they might detect in fitting an arrow to his bowstring, Mahéga now lighted a pipe, and courteously invited their leader to smoke; between every successive whiff exhaled by the latter, he cast an inquisitive glance towards the arbour, but the packages and the leafy branches baffled his curiosity; meanwhile the preliminaries of peace having been thus amicably interchanged, the other Aricarás cast themselves from their horses, and having given them in charge to a few of the youngest of the party, the remainder sat in a semicircle, and gravely accepted the pipes handed to them by order of Mahéga.

That chief, aware of the mischievous propensities of his new friends, and equally averse to intimacy or hostility with such dangerous neighbours, had bethought himself of a scheme by which he might at once get rid of them by inspiring them with superstitious awe, and gratify himself with a sight of one of those wonders which the Missionary had referred to in his last warning respecting the Prairie-bird. It was not long before the curious Aricará again expressed his desire

to know the Great Medicine contents of the arbour. To this Mahéga replied,

"A woman," adding again the sign of solemn mystery.

"A woman!" replied the leader, in his own tongue, expressing in his countenance the scorn and disappointment that he felt.

"A woman," repeated Mahéga, gravely; "but a Medicine Spirit. We travel to the mountains; she will then go to the land of spirits."

The Aricará made here a gesture of impatient incredulity, with a sign that, if he could not see some medicine-feat, he would believe that the Osage spoke lies.

Mahéga, desiring him to sit still, and his own party to be watchful, now approached the arbour, and, addressing Prairie-bird in the Delaware tongue, explained to her their present situation, and the dangerous vicinity of a mischievous, if not a hostile tribe, adding, at the same time,

"Olitipa must show some wonder to frighten these bad men."

"What is it to Olitipa," replied the maiden, coldly, "whether she is a prisoner to the Osage, or to the Western Tribe? perhaps they would let her go."

"Whither?" answered the chief. "Does Olitipa think that these prairie wolves would shelter her fair skin from the sun, or serve and protect

her as Mahéga does? if she were their prisoner they would take from her everything she has, even her Medicine Book, and make her bring water, and carry burdens, and bear children to the man who should take Mahéga's scalp."

Bad as was her present plight and her future prospect, the poor girl could not help shuddering at the picture of hopeless drudgery here presented to her eyes, and she replied,

"What does the Osage Chief wish? how should his prisoner frighten these wild men?"

"The Black Father said that Olitipa could gather the beams of the sun, as our daughters collect the waters of the stream in a vessel," said the Chief, in a low tone.

Instantly catching the hint here given by her beloved instructor, and believing that nothing done in obedience to his wishes could be in itself wrong, she resolved to avail herself of this opportunity of exciting the superstitious awe of the savages, and she replied,

"It is good. Let Mahéga sit by the strange men; Olitipa will come."

Hastily winding a party-coloured kerchief in the form of a turban, around the rich tresses of her dark hair, and throwing a scarf over her shoulder, she took her small bag, or reticule, in her hand, and stepped forth from the arbour. Such an apparition of youthful bloom, grace, and

beauty, extracted, even from the wild leader of the Aricarás, an exclamation of astonished admiration. Having seated herself upon a finely-painted bison robe, placed for her by Lita, she waited gravely until Mahéga should have prepared the stranger chief for what was to follow.

It was now scarcely an hour after noon, and the sun shone full upon them, with bright and excessive heat; Mahéga, pointing upward, explained to the Aricará that the Woman-Spirit would bring some fire down from that distant orb. He could not give any further information, being totally ignorant of the nature of the wonder to be wrought, and as anxious to witness it as the wild chief himself.

"Where will she place it?" he inquired.

"In the chief's hand," replied the maiden, whose intelligent mind had long since, during her residence with the Delawares, become familiar with the language of signs.

The two leaders now explained to their followers, in their respective tongues, the great medicine which they were about to see; and the latter, forgetful alike of distrust and precaution, crowded with irresistible curiosity about the spot, Mahéga alone preserving his habitual self-command, and warning those nearest to him to be prepared against treachery or surprise. The only ornament worn by the Aricará leader was a collar,

made of dark blue cloth, adorned with porcupine quills, and girt with the formidable claws of the grisly bear. This collar, being at once a trophy of his prowess, and a proof of its having been gained among the Rocky Mountain traders, (from whom alone the cloth could have been procured in that remote region,) was highly prized both by the owner and his followers, and was, therefore, as well as from its colour, selected by Prairie-bird as a fitting object on which to work her "medicine wonder." She desired him to take it from his neck and to place it on the grass, with his hands below it, that no fire might come near it. When he had complied with her request, she drew from her bag a burning-glass, and, carefully adjusting the focus, held it over the dark blue cloth, in which ere long a hole was burnt, and the astonished leader's hand below was scorched.

It is impossible to depict the wonder and awe of the attentive savages; they looked first at her, then at her glass, then at the sun; then they re-examined the cloth, and ascertained that it was indeed burnt through, and that the smell of fire still rested on the edge of the aperture. After this they withdrew several paces from the spot, the leader inquiring with submissive signs whether he might replace the collar? to which inquiry the maiden gravely bowing assent, retired again into the arbour. For some time a profound

silence ensued, the Osages being as much awe-struck as the Aricarás; even Mahéga himself was not proof against the prevalent feeling of superstitious terror; and thus, while desiring Prairie-bird to terrify others, he had unconsciously furnished her with a mysterious and powerful check upon himself.

It was not long before the Aricarás rose to take leave,—their chief presenting Mahéga with a fine horse; and receiving in return sundry ornaments and trinkets, of no real value, but highly prized from their rarity in that wild and desolate region. As they withdrew, they cast many a furtive glance at the harbour and its mysterious tenant, seemingly glad when they found themselves at such a distance as rendered them safe from her supernatural influence. On their return to their own people, they related, with considerable exaggeration, the wonders which they had witnessed; and Prairie-bird was long afterwards spoken of in the tribe by a name equally impossible to print, or to pronounce, but which, if translated into English, would be, “The Great-Medicine-Daughter-of-the burning-Sun!”

After this adventure, Mahéga pursued his uninterrupted way towards the spurs of the Rocky Mountains; his manner and bearing towards Prairie-bird being more deferential than ever, and the passion that he entertained for her being checked

and awed by the miraculous power that she had displayed ; he still nourished strong hopes of being able ultimately to gain her affection, but in the meantime resolved to turn her supernatural skill to good account, by frightening such wild roving bands as they might fall in with, and extorting from their superstitious fears valuable presents in horses and peltry.

Meanwhile, the maiden's observant eye had marked the effect upon Mahéga produced by the burning-glass, in spite of his well-dissembled indifference, and she secretly determined that the chief use that she could make of such exhibitions as were calculated to excite superstitious awe among Indians, should be to maintain the command over Mahéga, which she was conscious she now possessed.

During the whole of this long and toilsome march, the faithful and indefatigable Wingenund hovered over the trail at such a distance as never to be perceived by any of the party, and left at occasional intervals a willow-rod, or a slip of bark, so marked as to be a sure guide to an eye less keen and sagacious than that of War-Eagle. His only food was dried undressed buffalo meat ; his drink, the stream where the Osages had slaked their thirst ; his bed, the barren prairie ; he made no fire to scare away the prowling wolves, that yelped and howled at night round his solitary

couch, his only protection from their ravenous hunger being a tuft of damp grass, over which he rubbed some powder from his flask. Twice was he deseried and pursued by roving bands of Indians, but on both occasions saved himself by his extraordinary fleetness of foot; and the moment that the immediate danger was over, renewed his weary and difficult task.

Cheered by his deep affection for his sister, encouraged by the approval which he knew that his exertions would meet from War-Eagle and Reginald, and, more than all, stimulated by the eager desire to distinguish himself as a Delaware chief on this his first war-path, the faithful youth hung over the long and circuitous trail of his enemies with the patience and unerring sagacity of a bloodhound — and though she saw him not, Prairie-bird felt a confident assurance that her beloved young brother would be true to his promise, and would never leave nor desert her while the pulses of life continued to beat in his affectionate heart.

CHAPTER XI.

ETHELSTON VISITS ST. LOUIS, WHERE HE UNEXPECTEDLY MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND UNDERTAKES A LONGER JOURNEY THAN HE HAD CONTEMPLATED.

DURING the occurrence of the events related in the preceding chapters, the disputes and difficulties attending the distribution of peltries among the different fur companies at St. Louis had rather increased than diminished, and Ethelston had found himself compelled, however unwillingly, again to bid adieu to Lucy, and take a trip to the Mississippi for the arrangement of his guardian's affairs in that quarter; a considerable portion of the fortune that he inherited from his father was invested in the same speculation, and he could not, without incurring the charge of culpable negligence, leave it in the hands of others at a great distance, many of whose interests might perhaps be at variance with those of Colonel Brandon and himself.

He had been only a short time in St. Louis, when one day on passing the cathedral, he met

two men, whose appearance attracted his attention. The one was past the meridian of life, and the benevolent thoughtfulness of his countenance accorded well with the sober suit of black that indicated the profession to which he belonged; the other was a stout, square-built man, evidently cast in a coarser mould than his companion, but apparently conversing with him on terms of friendly familiarity. After looking steadily at this second, Ethelston felt convinced that he was not mistaken in addressing him, "Bearskin, my good friend, how come you to be in St. Louis? I thought you were busy, bear and buffalo hunting with my friend Reginald, among the Delawares of the Missouri?"

"Ha! Master Ethelston," replied the sturdy voyageur, "I am right glad to see your face here. We have been in some trouble of late, and instead of our hunting the bears, the bears has hunted us."

"I see you have been in some trouble," said Ethelston, noticing for the first time the boatman's scars and bruises; "but tell me," he added, hastily catching him by the arm, "has any evil befallen my friend, my brother Reginald?"

"No harm that I knows of," replied the other; "but I must say that things wern't what a man might call altogether pleasant, where I left him."

"What!" exclaimed Ethelston, with an indignation that he made no attempt to conceal,

"you left him in danger or in difficulties, and can give no account of him? Bearskin, I would not have believed this of you, unless I had it from your own lips!"

"Master Ethelston," answered the justly offended voyageur, "a man that goes full swing down the stream of his own notions, without heeding oar or helm, is sure to run athwart a snag; here's my worthy friend here, Paul Müller, and though he is a preacher, I'll hold him as honest a man as any in the Territory; he can tell you the whole story from one end to t'other; and when he's done so, perhaps you'll be sorry for what you've said to old Bearskin."

"I am already sorry," replied Ethelston, moved by the earnest simplicity of the scarred and weather-beaten boatman. "I am already sorry that I have done you wrong, but you will make allowance for my impatience and anxiety concerning my brother's fate!" (Ethelston always spoke of Reginald as his brother, for he had a secret and undefined pleasure in so doing, as it implied his union with the sister of his friend.) Paul Müller, easily guessing from the few words that had passed that the person now addressing Bearskin was the Edward Ethelston of whom Reginald had so often spoken to him, said,

"Sir, you certainly did an injustice to Bearskin, in thinking him capable of deserting a friend in

need ; but the apology you have offered is, I am sure, sufficient to satisfy him. The intelligence which I have to communicate respecting Reginald Brandon and his party is in some respects exceedingly melancholy ; if you will accompany me to our lodging, which is just at hand, I will explain it to you in full, meanwhile, rest satisfied with the assurance that, to the best of our belief, your friend is safe and well in health."

As soon as they had entered the house, Bearskin, forgetting the hasty words which had so much hurt his feelings, busied himself in preparing some refreshment for Ethelston, while the Missionary related to him all that had occurred since his friend joined the Delaware encampment. He did not even conceal from him the violent passion that the latter had conceived for Prairie-bird, and the despair with which, on his return to the village from the Sioux expedition, he would learn the destruction of her kindred, and her own captivity among the Osages.

" Indeed, my good sir," said Ethelston, " I must freely confess that this portion of your intelligence is the only one that brings with it any comfort ; the fate of Mike Smith and his companions, and the destruction of the unoffending Delawares, are disasters deeply to be lamented, but surely, the fact of the Osage chief having carried off the Indian maiden whom you call Prai-

rie-bird, and who seems to have exercised such a strange fascination over Reginald Brandon, can scarcely be regretted : for she will be more likely to find a congenial mate among the Red-skins, and a bitter disappointment will be spared to my excellent guardian, Colonel Brandon."

"I know not, my son," answered the Missionary mildly; "the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and it does frequently happen, as you say, that events which we lament at the moment, afford afterwards just grounds for rejoicing; nevertheless, I cannot view this matter exactly as you do, for I have known the maiden from her childhood, and she is a more fitting bride for a christian gentleman, than for a heathen warrior."

"I did, indeed, hear the Colonel, and the other members of the family at Mooshanne, say, that the Delaware youth who so bravely defended the life of Reginald at the risk of his own, had spoken in the highest terms of praise respecting his sister the Prairie-bird, as if she were a being of a superior race; but you, my good father, are above the prejudices which darken the minds of these Indians, and you must therefore know, that whatever may be her beauty and amiable qualities, she is, after all, the daughter of a Delaware chief, and as such, could not be a welcome inmate of my guardian's house."

"Nay, my son," replied the Missionary, "she is

but the adopted child of the venerable Delaware who lately fell in the massacre which I have related to you; she was not of his blood nor of his race; such qualities and nurture as she possesses have been in some measure the fruit of my own care and toil. Were it not that you might mistake my language for that of boasting, I would say, that although the prairie has been her dwelling, and a Lenapé tent her home, she does not in her education fall far short of your maidens in the settlements, who have had greater advantages of instruction."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a negro with refreshment, preceded by Bearskin, bearing in his hand a bottle of French brandy, of which he vaunted, not without reason, the excellent quality and flavour; but Ethelston continued to converse in an undertone with the Missionary, his countenance evincing every moment increased eagerness and interest in the subject of their discourse, which so absorbed his attention, that he never noticed the honest boatman's repeated attempts to call his attention to the refreshment which he had prepared. Even Paul Müller was unable to comprehend this sudden change in his manner, and his vehement desire to know all the most minute particulars respecting a person of whom he had spoken a few minutes before in terms of disparagement, but he attributed

it to the interest which he took in his friend's selected bride, and satisfied his curiosity to the best of his ability.

When all his many and rapidly uttered questions were answered, Ethelston rose from his seat and abruptly took his departure, saying, as he left the room, "Thanks, thanks, my good friends, you shall see me again ere long."

"And I care not much how long it may be before I see his face again," said Bearskin sulkily. "Here have I been bothering myself to make Pompey bring up these cakes and fruits, and I have opened a bottle of Father Antin's best brandy, and he goes off without tasting with us, or so much as taking a drop to wash down the ill words which were in his mouth a while since!"

"Nay, my good friend," replied the Missionary, "be not hasty to censure Master Ethelston, for he is a true and zealous friend to Reginald Brandon, and the news from the west seems to have affected him with much anxiety and alarm."

"That's all very well for you learned folk," said the unpacified boatmen, "but we don't do things after that fashion on the river-side; and for all he's the son of an old friend of the Colonel's, when he comes this way again he's like to hear something of my notion of his manners."

"What sort of character bears he at home?"

"Why, to tell the truth, his character's indifferent good; I never heard of his bein' rude or uncivil-like before."

"Well, then, Bearskin, if he comes here again give him an opportunity for explaining his sudden departure, before you take or express any offence at conduct of which you may not rightly understand the motives—come, my good friend, clear you brow, and let us partake with gratitude of the excellent cheer that you have provided."

Thus saying, the Missionary placed himself with his companion at table, and the ill-temper of the latter was dispelled by the first glass of Father Antin's cognac.

After this interview with Paul Müller, Ethelston pursued the business which had brought him to St. Louis with such vigour and energy, that at the close of a week's negotiation he was able to inform Colonel Brandon that by sacrificing a small portion of the disputed claim, he had adjusted the matter upon terms which he trusted his guardian would not consider disadvantageous; his letter concluded thus:

"Having now explained these transactions, and informed you in another letter of the melancholy fate of Mike Smith, and some of his companions, I must announce to you my intention of setting off immediately in search of Reginald, with the best-appointed force that I can collect here, for I

am seriously apprehensive for his safety, surrounded as he is by roving tribes of Indians, with some of whom he and his party are at open war, while the band of Delawares, upon whose friendship he might have relied, is almost destroyed. As it may be a work of some time and difficulty to find Reginald in a region of such boundless extent, I must entreat you not to feel uneasy on my account, should my absence be more protracted than I would wish it to be, for I shall be accompanied by Bearskin, and other experienced trappers; and I know that even Lucy would have no smile for me, on my return, if I came back to Mooshanne without making every exertion to extricate her brother from the difficulties in which these unexpected incidents have involved him."

By the same post Ethelston wrote also to inform Lucy of his resolution, and though she felt extremely vexed and anxious on account of the lengthened absence which it foretold, still she did him the justice in her heart to own that he was acting as she would have wished him to act.

Not a day passed that he did not consult with Paul Müller, and also with the most experienced agents of the fur companies, in order that he might provide the articles most requisite for his contemplated expedition, and secure the services

of men thoroughly trained and accustomed to mountain and prairie life.

In this last respect he was fortunate enough to engage a man named Pierre, a half-breed from the Upper Missouri, whose life had been spent among the most remote trading-posts, where his skill as a hunter, as well as in interpreting Indian languages, was held in high estimation. Bearskin, who was almost recovered from his wound, and from his short fit of ill-humour with Ethelston, agreed to join the party, and the good Missionary resolved to brave all dangers and fatigues in the hope of rejoining, and perhaps of being instrumental in rescuing, his beloved pupil.

With unwearied industry and exertion Ethelston was able, in one week subsequent to the date of his letter, to leave St. Louis in search of his friend, attended by eight hardy and experienced men, all of whom, excepting the Missionary, were well armed, and furnished with excellent horses, mules, and every necessary for their long and arduous undertaking.

Guided by Bearskin, they reached without accident or adventure the site of the desolate Lenape village, in the Osage country, and there fell in with one of the young Delawares detached by War-Eagle to observe what might be passing in the neighbourhood: from this youth they learnt

that War-Eagle and Reginald, with a small party, had gone westward in pursuit of Mahéga, and that the larger body of the surviving Delawares were on the trail of the more numerous band of the treacherous Osages.

Ethelston wished to go on at once in search of his friend, but the youth insisted that he should first assist his band in taking vengeance on their enemies. Promises and threats proved equally unavailing, and after the Missionary had exhausted all his eloquence in endeavouring to promote peace, he was himself compelled to assure Ethelston that his only chance of finding the trail of his friend in a spot so intersected by multitudinous paths, was to accede to the terms proposed by the Indian ; he concluded in these words,

“Doubtless the conduct of these Osages was blood-thirsty and treacherous. I cannot deny that they deserve punishment, but I would fain have left them to the chastisement of a higher power ; I know, however, that I cannot change the notion of retributive justice entertained by the Indians, and although I cannot prevent retaliation, my presence may soften the severities by which it is usually accompanied ; at all events I will not shrink from the attempt, especially as it is the only means by which we can possibly hope to trace those in whose safety we are so deeply interested.”

Ethelston could not press any further objection, and his party, under the guidance of the young Delaware, was soon in rapid motion upon the trail of the larger body of the Osages, who were, as it may be remembered, already pursued by a band of Lenapé warriors.

Towards the close of the second day's march, Ethelston and his party met the latter returning in triumph from a successful pursuit of their enemies, whom they had overtaken and surprised before they could reach the main body of the Osage village. The attack was made by night, and the Delawares had taken many scalps without the loss of a single man, but their number was not sufficient to justify their remaining in the neighbourhood of a force so much superior to their own, so they had retreated to the southward, and were now on the way to their former village, where they intended to perform more at leisure the funeral ceremonies due to their aged chief, and those who had been killed with him, and to appease their unquiet spirits by offering at their graves the trophies taken during their late expedition. A few of the most daring and adventurous entreated permission to join Ethelston's band in his search for War-Eagle, their favourite leader; nor was he by any means sorry to grant their request, justly considering the addition of

ten well-armed Lenapé warriors as a most desirable reinforcement to his party.

As soon as the selection was made, they separated at once from the remaining body of Delawares, and guided by the youth before mentioned, threw themselves upon the trail of Mahéga and his pursuers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OSAGES EN CAMP NEAR THE BASE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.—AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR ARRIVES.

AFTER parting with the Aricarás, Mahéga travelled westward for many days over that barren and desolate region lying between the sources of the Platte and Arkansas rivers, without falling in with any other Indians; his party was guided by a grim and scarred warrior, who had been on several hunting excursions to the Rocky Mountains, in the course of which he had been more than once engaged with the Shiennes, Crows, and other tribes, whose names have of late years become familiar to the general reader, but who were then known only to the few adventurous spirits who had pushed their way into that wild and dangerous country.

Prairie-bird, attended by her faithful Lita, and mounted on her high-mettled and sure-footed pony, was placed near the centre of the line of march, and Mahéga himself always brought up the rear, that being the post usually occupied by

an Indian chief on all occasions, excepting when engaged in attack or pursuit of a foe.

The maiden seemed to have resigned herself composedly to her captive condition ; and if she still harboured thoughts, or projects of escape, none could detect them in the quiet observant eye, with which she noted the new and interesting objects presented to her view. They had already passed the chain of hills known as the Ozark range, and leaving the Black Hills to the northward, were crossing the sandy elevated plain, which lies between them and the Rocky Mountains ; the sand of this district is of a reddish hue, and in many places the hollows and small ravines are incrustated with salt, which gives them, at first, the appearance of being covered with snow ; large masses of rock salt are also of frequent occurrence, and give to the waters of all the smaller tributaries of the Upper Arkansas a brackish and briny taste.

One evening, a little before sunset, Prairie-bird checked her horse, to enjoy at leisure the magnificent panorama before her ; and even the suspicious Mahéga forbore to interrupt her enjoyment of its beauties, contenting himself with viewing them as reflected on her own lovely countenance. To the northward was an abrupt crag of sandstone rock, towering above the plain, over which the party were now travelling ; its rugged

outline broken into a thousand fissures and rents, probably by the might of a rushing torrent in by-gone years, frowned like the turrets and battlements of an ancient feudal castle, and the maiden's fancy (recurring to some of the tales which had found their way into her slender library) peopled its lofty towers and spacious courts below with a splendid host of chivalry, fairest and foremost amongst whom was the proud and martial figure of Reginald Brandon!

Brushing a teardrop from her eye, she averted it from the castellated bluff, and turned it westward, where was spread a gradually ascending plain, covered with cedars, pines, and rich masses of various forest growth; far beyond which the Great Peak, highest of the Northern Andes, reared its majestic form, the setting sun shedding a flood of golden light upon the eternal snow reposing on its crest. With admiring wonder, Prairie-bird, to whom the dread magnificence of mountain scenery was new, gazed on the mighty landscape stretched out before her; she held her breath as the rays of the sinking sun changed the golden fleecy haze around the distant peak to a rosy hue, and soon again to a deeper saffron tint; and when, at last, it disappeared behind the rocky barrier in the west, Prairie-bird covered her eyes with her hands as if to enjoy over again in memory a scene of such surpassing beauty.

"Yes," she exclaimed half aloud ; "many of the works of man are wonderful, and the fictions of his fancy yet more marvellous, even visions such as rose before my imagination, when contemplating yon rugged, craggy height, but what are they when compared to the living wonders of creation ! Almighty Creator—merciful Father ! Thou hast led the steps of thy feeble and helpless child to this wild and remote mountain solitude ! it is filled with Thy presence ! Thou art her protector and guide—her trust is in Thee !"

Mahéga gazed with awe on the maiden as, with parted lips, and eyes upturned to the glowing western heaven, she seemed to commune with some unseen mysterious being ; and the other Indians, watchful of their leader's countenance, kept at a respectful distance until her short reverie was past, when the party resumed their march towards the spot chosen for the evening encampment.

The journey over the ascending sandy plain before mentioned occupied several days, at the end of which they reached the opening of a fertile valley, sheltered on three sides by steep ridges, well covered with wood, and watered by a clear stream ; far as the eye could reach the plain to the southward was studded with vast herds of buffalos grazing in undisturbed security ; the timid antelope bounded across the distant prairie ; and as the travellers entered the valley the quick eye of

Mahéga detected, on the velvet turf stretched beneath the northern ridge, numerous tracks of the mountain deer and of the argali, or big-horn, a species of goat, the chamois of the Rocky Mountains, found generally among the most rugged cliffs and precipices; to the scenery of which his long beard, bright eye, and enormous twisted horn give a wild and picturesque effect. Mahéga was so struck with the singular advantages offered by this valley, both as affording a sheltered camp, ample pasturage for the horses, and a plentiful supply of game, that he resolved to take up there his summer quarters, and in selecting the spot for his encampment displayed the sagacity and foresight peculiar to his character.

About a mile from the point where the valley opened upon the plain, there was, at the base of the northern ridge, a curved and secluded verdant basin of turf, the entrance to which was so narrow and so well shaded by overhanging trees that it was not visible from any distance, and could not be approached on any other side, owing to the precipitous height of the crags by which it was surrounded; on an elevated peak or promontory, immediately above the opening which led to this natural lawn grew a number of thick massive dwarf cedars, from under the shade of which a clear-sighted man could command a view of the whole valley, and give early notice to those encamped

below, of the approach of danger. Having satisfied himself that by posting a watchman there he could secure himself against the unperceived attack of any foe, Mahéga left three of his most trustworthy men in charge of Olitipa, and having despatched the remainder of his party to kill buffalo, proceeded to make a careful scrutiny of the valley, in order to ascertain whether there were signs of Indians in the neighbourhood, and whether, in the event of his being compelled to shift his quarters, he could find any defile through which it might be practicable to effect a retreat.

For three whole days he pursued his search with unremitting toil, during which time he ascertained that there were no visible traces of Indians being near, and that three miles higher up the valley there was a transverse opening in the northern ridge, which led to another and a larger valley, through which flowed a river of considerable magnitude. In the meantime the Osages had not been idle, and, although little pleased to perform menial services, such as are usually left to their women, they pitched the tent of Olitipa, with much taste, at the foot of a huge rock, and between two lofty pines; next to it they constructed, at a distance of only a few yards, a lodge for their chief, by stretching double plies of buffalo-hide over bent poles cut after their fashion; and again beyond that they raised a

larger and ruder skin lodge for themselves; the guitar and the few moveables belonging to Prairie-bird were carefully piled in her tent, and, as a watch was stationed at the opening to the valley, she was free to wander as she pleased among the trees which bordered the edge of the lawn on which they were encamped.

"Surely," said the maiden, casting her eyes upward to the beetling crags above, and then letting them rest upon the green turf at her feet, "if it be God's pleasure that I should be a captive still, he has granted me, at least, the favour of a goodly prison wherein to dwell."

She observed, with gratitude, the change that had taken place in the demeanour of Mahéga towards herself; so far from being harsh or violent, he was respectful in the highest degree, and, whether the change was owing to his fears, or to more creditable motives on the part of the Osage, she followed the advice tendered by the Missionary, by treating him with courteous gentleness. Whenever he addressed her it was in Delaware; and her perfect familiarity with that tongue rendered it easy for her to make such replies as the occasion might demand, sometimes ambiguous, sometimes mysterious, but always such as were not calculated to irritate or offend his pride.

Venison and buffalo meat abounded in the

Osage camp, the choicest morsels being always set apart for the use of Prairie-bird; and Lita gathered for her various kinds of berries, which are plentiful in that region, some of them resembling the gooseberry, the serviceberry, and others of excellent flavour; there was also found an esculent root, called by the Indians "*o-ka-no-mi*," of a farinaceous quality, which the Comanche girl had often seen on her native plains, and from which, when she had beaten and pulverized it between two flat stones, she baked a kind of cake, that was by no means unpalatable.

The Osages had now been encamped nearly a week on this pleasant and sheltered spot, dividing their time between their two favourite occupations of hunting and smoking; neither had any fresh Indian trail been discovered to arouse their suspicion or their watchfulness. Before retiring to rest, it was usual for Mahéga to come before the tent of Prairie-bird; and she, aware of the helplessness of her situation, came forth to meet him, receiving with guarded courtesy the fine compliments which he thought fit to pay her, and replying in a tone which, although not directly encouraging to his hopes, was calculated to soothe the irritation which her former treatment of him, and the recollection of his unsuccessful struggle with Reginald, had left upon his mind.

And here we may pause to observe how the strange contradictions that are found in the human character, frequently produce a line of conduct which would, at first sight, appear irreconcilable with all probability, and yet, which is in strict accordance with the secret workings of the wayward will by which it is directed. Thus Mahéga, when he first became smitten with the beauty of Prairie-bird in the Delaware camp, where she was surrounded by friends and protectors, wooed her with the rough impetuosity of his nature, and, finding his advances rejected, he resorted, as we have seen, to brutal violence, his passion being so much heightened by the obstacles which it encountered, that, in order to gratify it, he provoked that quarrel with the Delawares in which so much blood, both of his own people and of his allies, had been already shed. Now that he was triumphant, and felt secure of the person of his captive, a new and ardent desire had arisen within him, a desire to compel her to love him. In this pursuit, also, his proud and haughty spirit led him to anticipate success, and thus, for a time, the darker and more malignant feelings of his bosom slumbered undisturbed.

One evening, when he had held his customary talk with Prairie-bird, he retired to his lodge and the maiden to her tent, where she took up her long-neglected guitar, and ran her fingers care-

lessly through its strings. Lita sat by her side, braiding the front of a pair of moccasins with stained quills of the porcupine, and, although neither sigh nor tear betrayed her feelings, Prairie-bird, whose heart now led her intuitively to dive into that of her companion, saw that sad and busy thoughts were there; the Comanche girl, proud and reserved as she was with others, had been won by the gentleness of her mistress, to entertain for her an attachment, that was now strengthened and cemented by the trials and dangers which they had shared together; it might, indeed, be supposed that, as both were now captives of the chief of another tribe, the relation of mistress and servant had ceased, yet Lita seemed to think otherwise, and her attendance upon Prairie-bird was, if possible, more devoted than before.

"For whom are you ornamenting those moccasins, Lita?" inquired the latter, with a sad smile.

"For whom!" repeated Lita, casting up her dark eyes, and fixing them on her mistress as if she would read her soul. The tone in which the exclamation was uttered, and the look by which it was accompanied, assured Prairie-bird that her conjectures were well founded.

When the heart is full, one overflowing drop tells the contents of the golden chalice; and from

the two words spoken by her companion Olitipa gathered her meaning as well as if she had replied, "Is there any other being on earth but one, for whom I can be braiding them?"

The voice of Prairie-bird trembled with a conscious fellow-feeling, as she said, "Lita,—I ask not to know your secret, but I pray to the Great Spirit so to direct the steps of him for whom those moccasins are made, that he may receive them at your hands, and wear them for your sake!"

On hearing these words a deep blush came over the face and neck of the Comanche girl; a word of kindness had touched a spring, which in her wild and wayward nature would have been unmoved by fear or by violence, and she threw herself into the arms of Prairie-bird, giving vent to long-concealed emotions, in a flood of tears.

Scarcely had she regained her composure, and resumed her braiding, when the quick ear of Prairie-bird caught the sound of a low chirrup, like that of a grasshopper, close at the back of the tent; she remembered to have heard that signal before; the blood fled from her cheek, and she held her breath in agitated silence; again the sound was repeated, and Prairie-bird stole to the corner of the tent whence it proceeded, and stooping her head, said, in English, "If Wingunund is there, let him speak."

"My sister!" whispered the soft voice of the youth in reply.

" 'Tis he ! 'tis my dear young brother himself ! "

" Is all quiet, Prairie-bird ? "

" All is quiet. "

" Then Wingenund will pull out one of these tent-pegs, and creep in below the canvass,—he has much to say to his sister. "

In spite of the emotion caused by her brother's sudden appearance, and by the recollection that if discovered his life would certainly be forfeited, Prairie-bird retained sufficient presence of mind to continue passing her fingers through the chords of her guitar, in order to drown the noise made by Wingenund in removing the fastenings and effecting his entrance below the tent. At length he stood before her, and after gazing sadly, fondly on his countenance for a few moments, she fell upon his neck and wept ! The figure was indeed that of her favourite brother, but oh, how changed since she had last seen him ! Cold, wet, sleepless nights, fatigue and hunger, had all combined to wear and exhaust a frame which, although cast in Nature's fairest and most graceful mould, had not yet reached the enduring strength of manhood ; his once gay attire was soiled and ragged, the moccasins on his feet were of undressed bison-hide, torn, and scarcely affording any protection against the stones and thorny plants with which that region abounds ; his light bow, with a few arrows still hung at his back, and the hunting-knife at his girdle ; this

was all that remained of the gay accoutrements with which he had been adorned in the Osage village; yet, although the frame was emaciated, and the cheeks sunken, the proud lustre of his eye told of a spirit unquenched by suffering, and rising superior to the trials which had almost destroyed its earthly tenement. Prairie-bird longed to ask an hundred questions in a breath; how he had come? whether he had seen or learnt anything of War-Eagle and of Reginald? but affectionate compassion for her young brother's sad condition overcoming every other feeling, she said to him, "Dear, dear Wingenund, you are wearied to death, sit by me and rest; you are starved, are you not?"

"Wingenund has not eaten for two days," replied the youth, seating himself gently at his sister's side.

Fortunately, more than half of the evening meal, apportioned to Prairie-bird and Lita, remained untouched in the tent, and the latter instantly set before the youth some well-cooked cakes and bison-meat, luxuries such as had not passed his lips for many a day; and having also placed a vessel of water within his reach, she went, with the intuitive delicacy and sagacity of her sex, towards the opening of the tent, so as to afford Prairie-bird an opportunity of speaking unrestrainedly to her brother, and at the same time to secure them as far as

possible against interruption. Wingenund, with all his heroic patience and self-denial, was a young half-starved Indian, and the delicacies set before him vanished in a few minutes, as if they had been placed before a famished wolf. Prairie-bird offered him a draught of water, adding, with an affectionate smile, "My brother, 'tis well that there is no more meat, a full meal is dangerous after so long a fast!"

"It is enough," replied the youth; "Wingenund is well now."

"Tell me, then, how you have followed to this distant region, and whether you have seen anything of War-Eagle, and of—his friends?"

"Wingenund has seen none," he replied; "nothing, except the trail of Mahéga, and that he would have followed to the big salt lake, or to death."

"But how has it been possible for you to pursue the trail undiscovered, to find food, and to avoid strange Indians on the path?"

"Wingenund kept far behind the Washashe; their eyes could not reach him; he has left on every day's trail marks that War-Eagle will know; they will speak to him as plainly as my sister's medicine book tells her the Great Spirit's will. He will come soon and his friends with him."

"But my brother has not told me how he procured food on this toilsome journey?"

"When the Lenape's heart is full, he thinks little of food," replied the youth proudly. He added, in a more subdued tone: "It was not easy to find meat, for the Washashe had driven the bison from their path, and Wingenund could not leave their trail. Twice he has met bad Indians, who tried to kill him."

"And how did he escape them, being without a horse?" inquired Prairie-bird.

"They were too many for him to fight, and he ran from them, but being weak with hunger, one Aricará overtook him by the waters of the Arkansas. Wingenund shot him, and plunging into the river, dived; and the others never found him; but Wingenund lost his rifle; and since then he has eaten only roots and fruit."

The simple narrative of the hardships and sufferings which her young brother had undergone for her sake, and which his emaciated appearance attested but too well, brought fresh tears to the eyes of Prairie-bird, but she checked them as well as she was able, and said, "Tell me yet one more thing; how have you been able to reach this spot unperceived by the Osage watchmen?"

"Wingenund saw from far the camp chosen by Mahéga; he saw that he could not approach it in front; but the rocks behind are rough and high; he made a rope of bark and grass, climbed up the height, and let himself down from a pine-tree

above the tent ; but in case he should be discovered and killed by the Osages, he has left an arrow where War-Eagle is sure to find it, and the arrow will show him where to come."

"Dear, dear Wingenund, you are indeed a brother," said the maiden, deeply moved by the mingled foresight, patience, and devotion that he had evinced. "You are, indeed, a worthy son of the ancient people."

Here she was interrupted by a shrill cry ; Lita was at the same instant thrown rudely aside by Mahéga, who rushed into the tent, followed by two of his warriors. Wingenund sprang to his feet, but ere he could draw the knife from his girdle he was seized by the Osages, and his arms pinioned behind his back.

Dark and lowering was the frown which the angry chief cast upon his prisoner. The Delaware youth quailed not before it ; the hour of trial had arrived, and the haughty spirit rising within him, triumphed over all that he had undergone ; all that he knew he had yet to undergo. He drew himself to the full height of his graceful figure ; and fixing his bright keen eye full upon Mahéga, awaited his fate in silence.

"Has the cunning antelope of the Delawares run so far to see the den of the Black Wolf?" demanded the chief, with a contemptuous sneer. "Has the buffalo bull sent the calf on a path

that he was afraid to tread himself? Have the Lenape girls sent one of their number to carry wood and water for the Washashe warriors?"

Mahéga paused; and on finding that his cowardly and brutal jeers called forth no reply, nor changed a muscle on the haughty countenance before him, his anger grew more ungovernable, and he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "If the cur-dog will not bark, the whip, and the knife, and the fire shall find him a tongue! If he wishes not to be torn in pieces on the spot, let him say what brought him to the Osage camp, and where he has left War-Eagle, and his pale-faced friends!" Neither to the threats nor the inquiries of Mahéga, did Wingenund deign to make any reply, and the enraged chief struck him across the face with the heavy bull-hide whip suspended from his wrist;* the blow was given with such force that it laid open the youth's cheek, and a stream of blood poured from the cut. At the sight of this unmanly outrage, the self-control of Prairie-bird almost gave way, but a look from her brother recalled her to herself, and checked the impulse which would have led to the utterance of entreaty mingled with indignant reproach.

* The Indians in the Missouri constantly carry a short whip of bull, or cow-hide, suspended from their wrist, with which, when in pursuit of buffalo, or any other game, they lash their horses most unmercifully.

"Speak not, my sister," said the hero boy in the Delaware tongue; "speak not to the cowardly Washashe wolf! Waste not your breath on one who has only courage to strike when his enemy's hands are tied!"

Mahéga fixed his eyes upon the maiden, and a sudden thought lighted up his countenance with a gleam of malignant triumph. Approaching close to her, he said in a stern low whisper, "To-morrow, before the sun goes down, Olitipa becomes the bride of Mahéga, or that boy is burnt at a slow fire with such tortures as the Lenapé never thought of in dreams!" So saying, he ordered the prisoner to be carefully guarded, and left the tent.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAR-EAGLE'S PARTY FOLLOW THE TRAIL.—A SKIRMISH AND ITS RESULTS.—THE CHIEF UNDERTAKES A PERILOUS JOURNEY ALONE, AND HIS COMPANIONS FIND SUFFICIENT OCCUPATION DURING HIS ABSENCE.

NORWITHSTANDING the pains that Wingenund had taken to leave on the trail such occasional indications as might assist War-Eagle in following it, the progress made by the latter was much slower than might have been expected by any one who knew the fierce desire of vengeance that burnt within him. Several times did the impatience of Reginald Brandon vent itself in words, which he addressed in an undertone to Baptiste.

"I fear that my Delaware brother has lost some of his energies, in this great calamity which has befallen his tribe ; when he followed the Dahcotah trail his foot was light and swift, now, when more than life and death may hang upon the events of an hour, his march is heavy and slow as that of a jaded ox."

"Master Reginald," replied the Guide ; "you do the War-Eagle wrong. A trail on this hard

barren region is not like one in the prairies of Illinois, or Missouri, where, in every little bottom, there are patches of long grass on which it is marked as plain as a high road. We have passed to-day several trails of strange Indians, probably Aricaras or Upsarokas;* had the War-Eagle made a mistake and followed one of these we might have wandered several days before we recovered our right route; watch his eye, it is bent on the ground, not a blade of grass escapes it; he has not time for a word, even with you."

"I believe you are right, Baptiste; yet I have now studied my Delaware brother's countenance and character for some time. I have seen him under the influence of strong, ay of deadly passion, and I truly wondered at his self-control, but there seems now to be a dull, heavy load upon his spirit, as if it were overwhelmed."

"Look at your feet this moment," quoth the Guide; "and tell me if, on this hard spot, you can trace the trail on which we are moving."

"In truth I could not," said Reginald, looking down; "I grant our friend's sagacity in following

* Upsaroka, the Indian name of the tribe usually designated, in Rocky Mountain Travels, as the "Crows," a fierce, roving nation, who were then, as they still are, at deadly enmity with their neighbours the Blackfeet, and agree with them only in the propensity, to plunder or kill white men, whenever opportunity offers.

it, but what has that to do with the state of his mind and temper, which we were discussing?"

"More, perhaps, than you think, Master Reginald. Along this very path the steps of Mahéga and his warriors have passed, the hoofs of the horse bearing Olitipa have trod it; it is now broad daylight, yet you can see nothing; do you wonder, then, that you cannot discern the trail of the thoughts and purposes that travel, in the dark, over the heart of the Delaware?"

"Baptiste," said Reginald, smiling; "I knew that you were a skilful hunter, and an experienced woodsman, but I never before knew that you were a philosopher!"

"Nor I either, Master Reginald; but perhaps I may not be one after all. What is a philosopher?"

This blunt question, from the sturdy Guide, seemed somewhat puzzling to his young master, and the former continued, laughing, "Well, I suppose its some curious kind o' crittur or other that we never heard of in the woods, and you don't seem to have met it often yourself or you'd not find it so hard to give a description of it!"

"You are right, Baptiste, it is a creature not very often met with, either in the woods or in civilized life, but as I have likened you to it, I am in duty bound to describe it to you as well as I can. A philosopher is a man whose desires are

moderate, and his passions under due control; who can trace human actions to their real motives, and effects to their true causes; who can read the character of others without prejudice, and study his own without self-partiality; who can bear prosperity without pride, and adversity without repining;—such is my idea of a philosopher, the sketch is rough, but sufficient to give you some notion of the object in view.”

The Guide was silent for a few moments; he took off his hairy cap and twirled it several times round in his bony hands, as was his frequent custom when perplexed. At length he replied, “Well, Master Reginald, if that be what you call a philosopher, I’m sure War-Eagle is more like one than I am, and, perhaps, you’ll not take offence if I say that he is more like one than you are yourself; it comes natural to an Ingian to read his neighbour’s heart and hide what passes in his own. And, as to governing his passions, I think you have seen enough to convince you that, although they were as hot and wild as was the horse which you bestride, they are now as obedient to the bridle as Nekimi.”

“I grant it,” said Reginald, reining in the proud steed alluded to in the Guide’s illustration; “I grant it, and see how earnestly our Delaware friend is now bent upon his task; he has made a signal for the party to halt, and is stooping to

examine a blade of grass, as if life itself depended upon his acute sagacity."

It was, indeed, as the young man said; the Delaware chief had stooped to examine a bunch of grass by the side of the trail, in which his quick glance had detected a small object which would have escaped a less practised eye; with a subdued exclamation of surprise he seized it, and concealed it for a moment in his hand, a ray of animation lighting up his fine countenance; it was but for a moment, his features almost immediately relapsed into their usual melancholy, grave expression; and drawing near to Reginald, he put into his hands a small golden clasp, saying,

"My brother, War-Eagle knows it well, it was given by the Black Father to Olitipa; the trail is clear as the great white pathway of heaven."*

Reginald took the clasp, and seizing the hand which held it, he pressed it in silence to his heart; he had marked the varying expression on War-Eagle's countenance, he saw how a moment's recollection had changed the sanguine exultation of the lover, to the sad, yet steady firmness of the friend; and his heart yearned towards his Indian brother with an affection that words could not express; but they were not needed; his moistened eye and glowing cheek spoke volumes to his

* By this name the milky way is known among some of the Indian tribes.

friend, and War-Eagle bounded forward again upon the trail, his spirit excited by an incident which, though slight in itself, had called forth high and generous emotions.

A few minutes after the Delaware had resumed his post as guide, our hero purposely fell into the rear of the party, and throwing the rein loosely over the neck of his horse, turned the precious golden relic over and over between his fingers, and pressed it a thousand times to his lips; the ground over which they were travelling was a broken series of ravines or ridges, and thus he was enabled to indulge in the extravagant endearments which he bestowed upon the senseless trinket, without being exposed to the curious eyes of his fellow-travellers, now out of his sight.

He was aroused from his reverie by a terrific yell, accompanied by a sharp sensation of pain, and on raising his eyes perceived at once that he was cut off from his party by a mounted band of Indians, one of whom had shot an arrow through the fleshy part of his thigh, into the flap of the saddle, where it was still sticking. Instantly deciding that it was better to trust to the speed of Nekimi, than to the desperate chance of forcing his way through the Indians in front, he struck the steed with his heel, and turning his head towards the open prairie to the left of the trail, went off at full speed, followed by several mounted

warriors; his first care was to secure the clasp within his hunting-shirt; his next to examine the priming of his rifle, and of the pistols at his saddle-bow; finding these all in order, he looked round at his pursuers, who, although urging their horses by yells and blows, did not gain upon Nekimi even when going at an easy gallop.

Reassured by finding the advantage which he had over his enemies in the speed of his horse, Reginald cut the arrow where it pinned his leg to the saddle, and then without much pain or difficulty drew the shaft from the flesh. Being now satisfied that he had nothing to fear from the wound, he turned the head of his horse in a direction parallel to the trail on which his party had been marching, as he felt that his ultimate safety must depend upon his not being separated from them.

A loud yell, followed by a succession of rifle-shots announced to him that the attack on his friends had commenced, and although the broken nature of the ground still prevented him from seeing them, he could gather from the sound that they were at no great distance; rightly judging that they must be anxious respecting his own safety, he now applied his bugle to his lips, and blew a clear blast, which Baptiste immediately recognised as the concerted signal for "All's well," and cheerily responded to.

The Indians in pursuit of Reginald reined in their horses, and stood gazing at each other in astonishment, at sounds which had never before reached their ear, and all, excepting one, wheeled to rejoin the main body of their band; he who remained was evidently a chief, or principal brave, his dress was splendidly adorned with scalp-locks, eagle-feathers, and beads; and instead of the shaven crown and single tuft of hair usually worn by the Pawnees, and other Indians of the Platte and Missouri region, his long black hair streamed over his shoulders, and fell upon the haunches of the wild spirited courser on which he was mounted. When he found that the number of his enemies was reduced to a single one, Reginald was not of a temper to consider flight as any longer necessary, so he checked the speed of Nekimi, and trotting to the summit of a rising-ground in front of him, saw, at a little distance in the ravine below, the skirmish that was still continued between his friends and the attacking party.

But he was not long permitted to remain an idle spectator, for the Indian, having recovered from the surprise occasioned by the bugle-call, was again approaching him at full speed; Reginald turned his horse towards his assailant, and deliberately raising his rifle, waited until the latter

should be near enough to afford him a certain aim ; but the Indian observing his cool, determined bearing, and having some experience of the dangerous nature of the white man's weapon, suddenly wheeled his horse, and galloped to and fro in a zigzag direction, sometimes advancing, sometimes retreating, with a rapidity that left Reginald in doubt whether he were meditating an attack, or desirous only of exhibiting his wonderful powers of horsemanship.

These doubts were, however, soon resolved ; for in one of these swift evolutions, when passing the spot where Reginald stood, at a distance of fifty yards, the Indian suddenly threw himself half off his horse, and hanging over its side, discharged from under the animal's neck an arrow, which whizzed close by Reginald's ear ; then, when he was himself out of shot, resumed his seat in the saddle, and again wheeling his horse, prepared to repeat a manœuvre which had so nearly been attended with success.

On this second occasion Reginald was resolved to try his chance with the rifle, and when his enemy, emboldened by the quiet, and apparently surprised demeanour of the white man, threw himself again over the side of his horse, and came within a nearer range, our hero levelled his rifle at the animal, whose body shielded completely

that of his opponent, and the ball taking effect behind the shoulder, both horse and man rolled upon the grass.

Reginald sprung from his saddle and hastened to the spot, hoping to secure the Indian while still encumbered by the fallen horse, but the active savage leapt upon his feet, and not having time to fit an arrow to the string, struck a furious, but unsuccessful blow at the young man's head with his bow, then uttering his war-cry rushed upon him with a long sharp knife that he had drawn from his belt; but the Indian had mistaken both the skill and strength of the opponent with whom he thus rashly endeavoured to close, and in a moment Reginald's cutlass was buried in his chest. In vain he summoned all his remaining strength to strike a last blow, both hand and eye refused their aid, and he fell heavily forward upon the grass; Reginald, sheathing his cutlass, knelt by the side of the wounded man, and strove to staunch the blood; but his efforts were fruitless, the lungs were pierced, and it was evident that death was fast approaching.

The Indian, still conscious of what was passing around, and momentarily expecting the scalp-knife upon his forehead, the usual fate of the conquered amongst those of his race, gazed in surprise upon the countenance of the young man, who was now tending him with compassionate anxiety; they

could not interchange a word ; the Indian feebly raised his hand to his head with an inquiring look, and then pointed to the knife ; Reginald shook his head, as if to intimate that he need be under no apprehension of that indignity, and then continued his earnest, but ineffectual endeavours to staunch the flowing blood, while the sufferer's head rested upon his shoulder.

During this time not a groan escaped from the lips of the savage warrior ; but feeling his end at hand, he gathered his dying energies, and taking from his neck the magnificent collar which he wore, made from the claws of a grisly bear, bound together with skins of snow-white ermine, he gave it to Reginald, making him a sign that he should wear it, then supporting himself in a sitting posture by the end of his bow, which he had caught up from the ground, and with his eye steadily fixed upon the snow-clad peak now visible in the western horizon, the prairie-warrior breathed his last.

As soon as Reginald was assured that life was extinct, he stretched the unconscious limbs, closed the eyes, gathered the massive hair over the rigid countenance, and arranged the arms and accoutrements decently beside the fallen chieftain, knowing well that it would not be long before the body was borne off by those of his own tribe. There was neither exultation nor triumph on the young man's

countenance, as he looked from the lifeless form of his late adversary to that of the steed, which lay dead beside him, on which, not many minutes before, he was careering over his native plains in the pride and vigour of manhood ; he felt that the strength, the activity, the courage of the savage warrior, were equal to his own ; that it had depended upon a single successful thrust whether of the two should be now taking his last uncoffined sleep in the wilderness. Sad thoughts of his waiting mother and sister, musings on the fate of Prairie-bird stole upon his heart, and he continued gazing almost unconsciously on the body of the Indian, until he was aroused by a shrill blast from the bugle of Baptiste ; the signal-blast was "Beware;" and casting his eyes around, he saw that the band of Indians who had been skirmishing with War-Eagle's party, were advancing at full speed to the spot where he stood. His spirit rekindled by this fresh excitement, he caught up his rifle, and vaulting on the back of Nekimi, gave him the rein. The pursuers soon found that their chance of overtaking him was hopeless, and while they gathered round the body of their fallen chief, Reginald rejoined his party, who received him with a shout of triumph that reached the ears of the mourners on the far prairie.

As Reginald dismounted and walked gravely through the group to salute War-Eagle, every eye

was fixed upon the bear-claw collar around his neck, and he received the silent homage which Indian warriors pay to successful valour.

There was also a quiet dignified modesty in the young man's bearing and demeanour, which did not escape their observant and approving eyes. "My brother is welcome," said War-Eagle, extending his hand to greet his friend; he has killed a great chief; when the warriors tell their deeds at the war-dance, the tongue of Netis will not be silent."

"The red-man of the prairie was brave," replied Reginald; he died like a warrior. I trust his spirit is gone to the happy land."

"Master Reginald," said the Guide, thrusting his large bony hand into that of our hero, "it did my heart good to see the Ingian fall; he sprang upon you like a tiger, and I feared he might catch you unawares."

"No, Baptiste, no; he was a gallant fellow, and I am truly sorry that, in self-defence, I was obliged to kill him, but the advantages were all on my side. Nekimi was far swifter than his horse, and his knife was no match for my cutlass. Do you know to what tribe he and his party belonged?"

"Capote-bleu, Master Reginald,—this is the first time you have seen *Les Corbeaux*—Upsaroka they call themselves; they are a wild race." And

he added, in a lower tone, "We shall see more of them before we go much further."

"In the skirmish which they had with you, were any wounded on either side?"

"Not many, for the rascals galloped about in such an unaccountable flurry, it wasn't easy to make sure work with the rifle; but the Doctor scored the ribs of one, and I think War-Eagle struck another; they kept at a very unfamiliar distance, and their arrows were as harmless as snow-flakes."

"How fared it with Monsieur Perrot?" inquired Reginald, who saw the light-hearted valet grinning with satisfaction at his master's victory and safe return, "did he not try his skill upon any of these marauding Crows?"

"Well, I hardly know," said the Guide. "Master Perrot is like the bear in the tree, he fights very well when he can't help it; but I conceive he's not over-fond of the redskins ever since that Dahcotah handled his wig so roughly! What say you, Monsieur Perrot?"

"Monsieur Baptiste is not altogether wrong," replied the good-humoured valet; "if one of those red Corbeaux come very near to peck me, I do my best to pluck his feathers out; but I much rather see a fat partridge or capon than one of them!"

The conversation between the Frenchman and

the Guide was interrupted by War-Eagle, who made a sign to the latter, as well as to Reginald, that he wished to speak with them apart.

"Brother," said the Chief, addressing our hero, "the Upsarokas are many; their warriors are like the bison-herds; they will soon return to our path, we must be ready for them. What is my brother's counsel?"

"Baptiste," said the young man, "you have more experience in these matters than I have; speak first."

The Guide did not reply immediately; he bent his eyes upon the ground, and his fingers rested on the head of the massive hatchet from whence he derived his Indian name. When he spoke it was with slow but decisive enunciation. "War-Eagle has spoken truly, the Crows will return in greater numbers; they will seek revenge for the death of their chief; they are brave, but their arms are bad—we are few, but our weapons can do service. My counsel is, that we choose a strong camp and await their coming; we will then handle them so that they shall not desire to interrupt us again, or perhaps they may offer to make a treaty upon our own terms."

"The words of Grande-Hâche are wise," rejoined the Chief; "he does not waste his breath in blowing against the wind. What says my brother Netis?"

"He says," replied Reginald, with his characteristic impetuosity, "that the counsel of Grande-Hâche may be good for our own safety, but it will not bring us nearer to Mahéga. Netis would follow the Osage trail in spite of all the Crows between the Platte and the Mountains."

"My brother speaks like a warrior without fear," said the Chief in reply; "yet we cannot follow the trail of the Washashe while fighting by day and by night with the Upsaroka. War-Eagle will join the counsel of Grande-Hâche to that of Netis. Let us choose a strong camp, bring in plenty of meat, and prepare to receive the Upsaroka. I will steal away alone in the night. I will follow the trail of Mahéga, and return to tell my brother what I have seen. It is enough, I have spoken."

Both the Guide and Reginald approved the Chief's decision; and although our hero would rather have accompanied him on the trail, he felt that he would impede the progress of his Indian brother, whose fleetness of foot was so much greater than his own; he therefore acquiesced with cheerfulness, and they set forward to select a camp that should unite the advantages of a defensible position to those of a plentiful supply of water.

For several hours War-Eagle pursued the Osage trail without halting, but his keen eye roved occasionally from side to side in search of a spot fa-

avorable for encampment, while Reginald and Baptiste brought up the rear of the party; the former mounted on Nekimi, prepared to gallop forward to the front and give the alarm, in case of the reappearance of the marauding Crows. About an hour before sunset they reached a valley watered by a small stream, the taste of which proved refreshing, and free from the salt with which that region abounds; near the centre of the valley was a thick copse of alder and willow, covering a space of fifty or sixty yards square. On forcing his way through the outer bushes, War-Eagle found an open plot of fine level turf, entirely surrounded by the copse which sheltered it from view on all sides.

The Delaware, having brought his party into this natural encampment, and picqueted the horses within the space above-mentioned, made a careful examination of the thicket, in which he was accompanied by Reginald and Baptiste; they then selected the points from which they could best command the approaches from different quarters; at these they piled logs and branches matted with grass and turf, from behind which secure, though slight breast-work, they could take deliberate aim at any hostile party approaching from the prairie. Before dusk their preparations were complete; the watch was set, and the remainder, after a frugal supper, forgot the fatigues of the day in sleep.

The night passed without the occurrence of any alarm ; and an hour before daylight, War-Eagle arose and prepared himself for his perilous expedition, after the ancient fashion of his tribe ; a fashion which the Delawares, in common with most of the semi-civilised Indians, have in these modern days neglected, if not forgotten.

Having smeared himself from head to foot with an ointment made from the fat and marrow of deer, he painted his face and chest with stripes of a dark colour, purposely making the form and device to resemble those of the Missourian nations. He wore upon his legs a light pair of deerskin leggins, without ornament, supported at the waist by his belt ; from the latter was suspended on one side his tomahawk, on the other his knife ; he also stuck into it a brace of loaded pistols given to him by Reginald, and within the folds secured some bullets and charges of powder, as well as a few slices of dried buffalo-meat ; his throat, chest, and arms were naked, with the exception of a small light blanket, which, when thrown across his shoulder, did not in the least impede the free exercise either of his hands or feet. As speed was now his chief object, he left both his rifle and his heavy war-club in the charge of Reginald, who looked on with mingled feelings of admiration and envy, while his friend was preparing for his solitary journey. Knowing that

War-Eagle, if successful in his undertaking, would see the Prairie-bird, he longed to send by him a thousand messages of love, yet he remembered and respected the feelings of his friend, and, controlling his own, embraced him in silence.

As War-Eagle was about to depart, Reginald was surprised at seeing him attach to his belt a small bunch of feathers, carefully tied together, and he imagined that they might be in some measure connected with his Indian brother's totem, or heraldic designation, but the latter resolved his doubts by saying to him and to Baptiste,

“ War-Eagle will follow the trail of Washashe as swiftly as his feet can run ; whenever it is difficult to find, or divides in a fork, he will stick one of these small feathers in the grass ; let “ Attō ” follow first on the trail, he has been often on the war-path, and his eyes are good ; Grande-Hâche with his long rifle should come next—let my brother go last with Nekimi, and let him always have eyes in his back ; the Upsarokas are cunning, and the wives of a dead chief are lamenting. If War-Eagle lives, he will return quick and meet his brothers on the trail ; if he is killed, he will meet them afterwards in the fields where his fathers hunt. Farewell.” So saying, the Delaware chief pointed impressively to the distant ridge of the mountains, and left the encampment.

After the departure of War-Eagle, Reginald

busied himself, with the aid of Baptiste, in making further preparations against the expected attack. On inquiring of the latter, he learnt, with much satisfaction, that Attō or A-tō (*Anglicè*, "The Deer,") who had been designated by the chief as leader on the trail in his absence, was a tried and experienced warrior. His appearance, indeed, was not much in his favour, for he was small and spare in stature, and his features, though not positively ugly, were stern, and rarely lighted up by expression; his eye was piercing rather than brilliant, and he scarcely ever spoke, excepting in reply to a question. His swiftness of foot, which was almost equal to that of War-Eagle himself, had procured for him the appellation by which he was known in the tribe. It should however, in justice to him, be mentioned, that he seldom ran *from* an enemy, for his courage was proverbial, and in a former expedition against the Dahcotahs, he had made several escapes so extraordinary, that his comrades had given him a name consisting of sixteen or seventeen syllables, which we will not inflict upon civilised eyes or ears, but which signifies, "The-man-who-cannot-be-killed-by-an-arrow."

Reginald, finding that Attō was familiar with the English tongue, and desirous to be on good terms with his new officer, addressed him as follows:—

"Does Attō think that the Upsaroka will come to-day?"

"They will come."

"Will they attack us in this position?"

"Perhaps; the Upsarokas are fools—they do not know the Lenapé."

"Are you satisfied with the arrangements we have made for the defence?"

"Yes; but you should let the horses feed outside, with a guard, or they will soon eat up the grass within; it will be time enough to drive them in when the Upsaroka come."

"You are right," said Reginald, frankly, and he ordered it to be done immediately.

Savages are extremely like ourselves in all that concerns the internal workings of self-respect; and if Reginald already stood high in Attō's opinion for his courage and bodily advantages, the Indian was disposed to think more highly of him when he found, even in a matter so trifling, that the young man listened to and followed his counsel.

The forenoon passed without any tidings of the Crows, and Reginald, impatient of a state of inaction, resolved to sally forth upon Nekimi, and to make a sweep over the adjacent undulating prairie, to see whether he could discover any signs of them.

Armed with his knife, pistols, and outlass, he

slung his spy-glass over his shoulder, and vaulted on the back of his favourite, charging Baptiste and Attō, now left in joint command of the garrison, to keep a sharp look-out, and promising to return before dusk.

How did his blood dance with excitement as he found himself trotting briskly across the virgin turf of that wild, boundless, vegetable ocean; beneath him a steed bold, eager, joyous as himself; above him a blue immensity of unclouded sky; and around him breezes fresh from the snowy chambers of the Northern Andes! Nor were the sources of excitement from within wanting to complete its measure,—a consciousness of youth, and health, and strength; a mind capable of appreciating the wonders of Nature, and of following them up to their Almighty Framer; a heart filled to overflowing with the image of a kindred being whose love he doubted not, and whom, in spite of dangers and obstacles, his ardent and sanguine spirit whispered that he would soon rejoin!

Again and again did he draw from his bosom the precious clasp, which assured him that he was following her footsteps, and then replacing it, he would stoop over the neck of Nekimi, and caressing his playful ear, and gently pressing his flank, the noble creature caracoled, neighed, and bounded beneath him, like the “wild and wanton herd”

described in one of the most exquisite scenes depicted by our immortal dramatist.*

Notwithstanding the excited flow of his spirits, Reginald did not forget the object of his excursion; he not only noted carefully the various remarkable features of the surrounding country, so as to secure, in case of need, his retreat to the encampment, but he scanned the side of every hill, and the bosom of every valley that he passed, to see whether any parties of the Upsaroka were yet within view.

He had ridden many miles without seeing anything alive, except a few straggling buffalos and antelopes, and was on the point of returning towards the camp, when he descried some moving body on the sky-line in the eastern horizon; throwing himself from his horse, he adjusted his telescope, and fixing it on the object, ascertained at once that it was a large party of Indians on horseback. Although his glass was of excellent quality, they were so distant that he could not count them, but he was satisfied that they considerably exceeded an hundred. Observing that their course was directed westward, he was able, by descending an oblique ravine, to reach the edge of a copse which they were likely to pass at no great distance, whence, himself unseen, he might

* Merchant of Venice, Act v.

watch their movements, and form a more accurate estimate of their force.

He had not been long stationed at the post which he had selected for this purpose, when the band came full in view on the ridge of a neighbouring hill.

That it was a war-party of the Crows he could no longer doubt, as their dress and appearance were precisely the same, and they were following with the faultless sagacity of a pack of blood-hounds, the trail which he and his companions had trodden on the preceding day.

Being completely sheltered from their view by the copse, he was able to observe their movements, and to plan his own accordingly; he counted upwards of two hundred and fifty mounted warriors, and his impression was that their numbers amounted in all to nearly three hundred; they moved forward upon the trail at an even pace until they reached the brow of the hill, whence they could perceive, although at a considerable distance, the thicket in which the Delawares were encamped. Pausing here, they held a brief council; it was clear that they suspected that the above-named wood contained those of whom they were in pursuit, nor was it long before their lynx eyes detected a slight column of smoke curling up above the trees, on seeing which they shouted aloud, while their rapid and vehement gesticulations suffi-

ciently explained to Reginald the discovery that they had made.

It was evidently not the present intention of the Crows to make an open attack, for they now divided their force into two bands, each of which pursued its course along the back of the ridges which crowned the valley wherein the encampment lay, and thus they would be enabled to reach a point not far distant from their enemy on opposite sides, before their approach could be perceived.

The position of Reginald himself was now critical, for in his eagerness to watch the motions of the Indians, he had allowed them to get between him and his own party; it only remained for him, therefore, to decide whether he should endeavour to reach the camp unperceived, or trusting to the speed of Nekimi, ride boldly towards it; he chose the latter, rightly judging the impossibility of escaping Indian eyes in so open a country, and he thought it also probable that if they meditated a night attack upon the encampment, they would permit him to enter it without showing themselves.

Having therefore examined the priming of his pistols, and loosened his cutlass in the sheath, he pushed his way through the thicket, and emerging on the opposite side, rode deliberately forward.

Choosing the most open ground, he pursued his



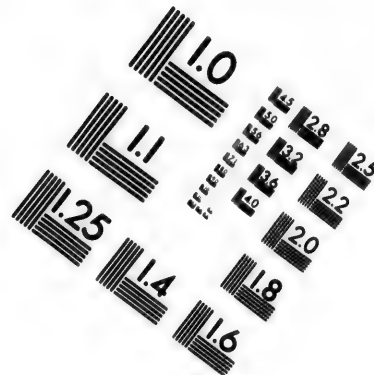
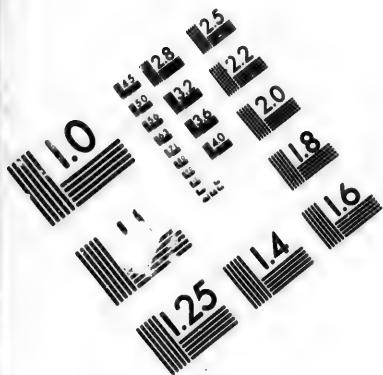
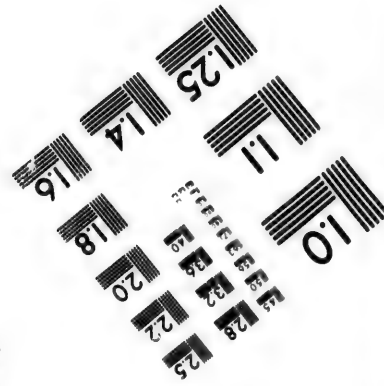
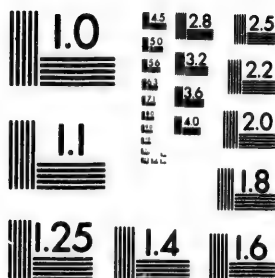


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homeward way down the valley, and though his eye glanced occasionally to the hills on each side, not an Indian was to be seen, and in less than an hour he found himself again within the precincts of the wooded camp.

The gravity of his demeanour as he joined his companions, led them to conjecture that he had seen some trace of their enemies, which impression was confirmed amongst them when he led Baptiste and Attō aside to hold with them a council of war.

Having briefly detailed what he had seen, he expressed his belief that the Crows had divided their force for the purpose of attacking the camp in the course of the ensuing night, and concluded by asking their opinion as to the most advisable means of defence. After a short deliberation, it was agreed that four men should watch at the opposite sides of the thicket, each of whom being well sheltered behind a log of wood already rolled to its edge, could detect the approach of an enemy from the prairie, and that each should be provided with two loaded rifles, so that in case of his being obliged to fire one to give the alarm, he might still have another ready for immediate use.

These preparations having been made, and the horses brought within the encampment, the little party sat down to their supper, and afterwards smoked their pipes as unconcernedly as if

neither Crows nor danger were lurking in the neighbourhood. Night came on, and those whose turn it was to sleep, announced by their heavy breathing that the hour of rest was not unwelcome; Monsieur Perrot snored so loudly from beneath the pile of blankets in which he had enveloped himself, that he more than once received a slight admonition from the elbow of the half-awakened Guide, who lay beside him. Reginald, however, was in a mood which would have no fellowship with sleep, his thoughts were of Prairie-bird, still in Mahéga's power, of his Indian brother, now far on his solitary and dangerous journey, of the lurking foes whose attack he hourly expected, and of the familiar faces at Mooshanne, whom distance and absence now rendered doubly dear. The night was dark, for the young moon, after traversing her appointed section of the southern sky, had disappeared, and the twinkling stars threw but an uncertain light, rendered yet more doubtful by the leafy branches which waved gently to and fro under the light breath of the night breeze.

In order to give some employment to his unquiet spirit, Reginald resolved to visit the several stations where his sentries were posted, and throwing his rifle over his shoulder, arose and commenced his rounds. Moving with a slow and noiseless step, he went to each of the posts in succession, and finding all the watchmen on the alert,

whispered to each a word of approbation. The last station that he visited was occupied by Attō, and Reginald, sitting down behind the log, conversed with him for a short time, in a low tone of voice, each pausing at intervals to listen and look out upon the valley. On a sudden, Attō, touching his arm, pointed to a spot near the summit of the neighbouring hill; and following the direction indicated, Reginald could plainly see a small light, as of a dry stick, which burnt for a few seconds and was then extinguished.

"Let Netis watch," whispered the Indian; "Attō will return directly;" and with these words he disappeared in the thicket.

Not many minutes elapsed ere he came back, and in the same subdued tone, said, "All is well now, the Upsaroka are coming, Attō saw the same light on the other hill; it is a sign for both parties to attack from opposite sides at once."

"All is well, indeed," thought Reginald, within himself. "This fellow must have a strange stomach for fighting, when he applies such a term to an expected conflict, were the odds are to be two or three hundred to ten."

These were Reginald's thoughts, for a moment; but his words were: "Baptiste, Perrot, and I, will remain at this post, you can spare us also one of your warriors; you will guard the opposite post with three others; there will remain one to move

constantly round within the edge of the thicket, to summon us to any point where the Crows may threaten an attack. Is the plan good, what says my brother?"

"It is good," replied the Indian, and they set about it forthwith in earnest and in silence.

Reginald and Baptiste, having previously examined all the logs which were now to serve for their defence, lost no time in selecting their respective stations; the Indian warrior allotted to them was placed between them; Monsieur Perrot, safely ensconced behind the fallen trunk of an alder, was to load his master's rifle, and when discharged, to replace it by another; and the defenders of the camp were all instructed not to fire until their enemies were so near as to afford a certain aim.

The side on which Reginald was stationed was the most open to attack, from its being adjacent to the brook that flowed through the centre of the valley, the banks of which, being dotted here and there with alder-bushes, afforded an occasional covert to an approaching enemy. Nearly an hour had elapsed, and Reginald began to suspect that they had mistaken the intentions of the Upsaroka, when Baptiste pointed in silence towards the prairie, and on following with his eye the direction of his companion's finger, he saw a dusky object in motion. Looking steadily for-

ward, each with his finger on the trigger of his rifle, Reginald and Baptiste could now distinguish the figures of several Indians, creeping along the ground towards the thicket. On a sudden the report of Attō's rifle in the opposite quarter was heard, and the creeping figures starting up, advanced with shouts and yells, vainly hoping that the spot, which they had selected for attack, was defenceless. When they were within a few paces, Reginald and Baptiste fired at once, and the two leading Indians fell; most of their companions retired in dismay, one only sprung forward with desperate courage, and his evil destiny bringing him close past the log, behind which the Guide was posted, the latter cleft the skull of the unfortunate savage with his tremendous hatchet.

Maddened by disappointment, and by the loss of several of their comrades, the Crows let fly a shower of arrows, at the edge of the thicket, and retreated on all sides, filling the air with their cries and yells. Reginald, having crossed over to visit Attō at his post, found that the Delaware had not fired in vain, for a reeking scalp already hung at his belt, and it appeared that the enemy had retired on this side also, as soon as they found themselves exposed to the murderous fire of unseen marksmen.

Not long after this unsuccessful attack on the part of the Upsarokas, day broke, and having

mounted their horses, which had been left at some distance, they returned towards the encampment ; and galloping to and fro, endeavoured, by every kind of insulting gesticulation, to induce their cautious enemies to come forth, or at least to exhaust their ammunition by firing at random ; but Reginald's party kept close within their covert, taking no notice whatever of these bravadoes, although several of the horsemen came within a distance which would have rendered them an easy mark for the Guide's unerring rifle ; their insolence produced only a grim smile on his weather-beaten countenance, as he whispered to Reginald,

"They are somewhat out of their reckoning as to the 'Doctor's' range ; poor devils, if they'll only keep off, I don't want to hurt any more of them ! But if that long-haired fellow, capering on a brown horse, were a Dahcotah, I'd make a hole in his hunting-shirt before he was many minutes older."

"I am glad to find you in a merciful humour, Baptiste," replied the young man ; "I too would willingly avoid farther slaughter of these Crows, and while fighting with them we are losing time more precious to me than gold."

As he was yet speaking, his attention was caught by the sound of a scuffle within the thicket, followed by a shout, and immediately afterwards Attō and another Delaware came for-

ward, dragging with them a Crow, whom the quick eye of the former had detected lurking under the dense foliage of an alder-bush.

"Whom have you here?" exclaimed Reginald ;
"and where did you find him?"

"Upsaroka," replied Attō ; "he must have crept like a snake under the grass, for the Delawares are not blind, yet he is here."

The prisoner was a tall, bold-looking youth, and he seemed resolutely prepared to meet the fate which a spy and an enemy must expect in that wild region.

"'Tis a fine lad," said Baptiste drily, "and he has given us a lesson to keep a better look out ; 'tis clear that he has crept down the brook, while we have been watching those galloping thieves : tie the rogue's hands, my friend Attō, and let us scour the thicket from one end to the other. Two or three such as him within the camp, in the middle of the night, would be apt to interfere with our rest."

The prisoner having been bound, Attō proceeded with two of his warriors to search every corner of the thicket, while Baptiste, with the remainder, watched the various parties of horsemen who were still hovering at a distance.

Reginald was left for a few minutes alone with the youth, whom he looked at with mingled compassion and admiration, for it was clear that he

had devoted his own life to obtain a triumph for his tribe, and although he had not the expressive intellectual beauty of Wingenund, nor the heroic stamp of form and feature by which War-Eagle was distinguished, yet there was a certain wild fierceness in his eye betokening a spirit, that awakened a feeling of sympathy in Reginald's breast. While looking stedfastly on the youth under the influence of these feelings, he observed that the Delawares, in their hurried anxiety to secure the prisoner, had bound the thongs so tightly round his arms as to cause a stoppage of the blood, the veins around the ligature being already swollen to a painful extent.

With the unhesitating generosity of his nature, Reginald stepped forward, and loosening the thong, left the youth at liberty ; at the same he smiled, and pointing to the knife in his belt, made the sign of " No," intimating that he should not repay this benefit by using that weapon.

The quick-sighted savage understood him as plainly as if the hint had been given in his own language, for he instantly detached the knife from his belt and presented it to Reginald. There was so much natural dignity and sincerity in his manner while doing so, that our hero in receiving his weapon, gave him in exchange a spare knife that hung in his own belt, making at the same time the Indian sign for friendship.

The nerves which were strung to endure expected torture and a lingering death, were not prepared for this unlooked-for clemency; the youth spoke a few soft words in his own tongue, looking earnestly in Reginald's face. He had not yet recovered his self-possession when Attō returned with his companions, to report that the prisoner must have come upon this dangerous war-path alone, as no other of his tribe was lurking in or near the thicket.

"Attō," said Reginald, addressing the Delaware; "this youth belongs by right to the hand that took him, he is yours; I ask you to give him to me, to do with him as I like."

"The hand and the heart of Attō are both open to Netis; he is brother to the war-chief of the Lenapé—Attō is glad to give him what he asks."

"Attō is a brave man," replied Reginald, "and worthy of his race; he can see that this youth is on his first war-path; he came to the camp to make himself a name; if the quick eye of Attō had not found him, there would have been a war-cry in the night—is it not so, brothers?"

The Delawares gave their usual exclamation of assent.

"Brothers," continued Reginald; "Attō has given this youth to me—I thank him: the hand of Netis is not shut, it holds a collar which hung

upon the neck of a great warrior, it will not be ashamed to hang on the neck of Attō."

As he said this, he threw over the neck of the Delaware the magnificent bear-claw collar which adorned his own. This was perhaps the happiest moment of Attō's life, for such a collar could be worn only by braves of the highest rank in Indian aristocracy, and the acclamation with which his comrades hailed the presentation of the gift, assured Reginald that it had been neither unwisely nor unworthily bestowed.

The latter then turned towards the prisoner, and made him a sign to follow towards the outer edge of the thicket, in the direction where Baptiste and he had shot the two Indians who led the attack; their bodies still lay where they fell; the youth gazed upon them with stern composure. Reginald inquired by a sign if he knew them; he replied in the affirmative; and he added, pointing to the nearest of the two, a sign which Reginald did not comprehend; he turned to Attō for an explanation.

"He says," replied the Delaware, "that was his father."

Reginald, much affected, placed the youth's hand against his own breast in token of regard, and made him understand that he was free to go himself, and to remove the bodies without interruption.

The young Crow replied by a look of gratitude too expressive to require the interpretation of language, and moving towards the body of his father, bore it into the midst of his wondering companions, who received him with repeated wailings and cries; none, however, seemed disposed to believe in his assurance that they might take away the other body likewise; he was obliged to return himself, and then one of his tribe, seeing that he stood uninjured beside it, came out from their ranks and assisted him to bear it off.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.—REGINALD PREPARES TO FOLLOW
THE TRAIL.

FOR two days the band of Crows hovered round the encampment, sometimes showing themselves on the adjacent heights, at others drawing off to a distance, in hopes of enticing some of Reginald's party to venture into the open country; but although he himself chafed and fretted like an impatient steed, he was sensible of the risk that must attend any error or imprudence while in the neighbourhood of an enemy so crafty and so strong in numbers, and he never permitted the watchfulness of his little garrison to be relaxed for a moment; the horses were driven to feed under the guard of two armed Delawares, and were not sent to a distance whence their return could be intercepted, and the watches were regularly set and relieved during the whole night.

On the third day the Crows, finding that all their endeavours to draw their cautious enemy from the covert were vain, held a council of war, after which three or four of their principal chiefs approached the encampment, making, as they ad-

vanced signs of amity and truce. Reginald went out to meet them, accompanied by Baptiste and Attō, leaving orders with the remainder of his party to hold themselves in readiness against any attempt at treachery ; halting at a spot not more than eighty yards from the wood, he awaited the Crow leaders, who came forward to meet him without any apparent suspicion or treacherous design.

They had taken the precaution to bring with them the youth to whom Reginald had already shown kindness, and whose presence they rightly conjectured would facilitate the amicable nature of their mission.

Reginald acknowledged with a smile the friendly greeting of his young protégé, and then drawing himself up to his full height, awaited in silence the opening of the parley.

The Crow *partisan** first glanced his keen eye over the persons of those whom he was about to address, as if scanning them for the purpose of ascertaining their qualities and character, and whether he should best succeed by endeavouring to circumvent or to overawe them. Keen as he was, his penetration was here at fault, for although no three persons could be more dissimilar than those before him, yet, whether taken collectively

* In the Travels of Major Long, and others, who have described the Indians of the Far-western prairies, the "brave" who leads a war-party is usually designated a "partisan."

or severally, they looked like men who would not be easily over-reached ; his eye first rested on the spare sinewy frame, and impenetrable countenance of Attō, thence it glanced to the muscular frame and shrewd hard features of the Guide, and turning from them, it found but little encouragement in the bright bold eye, and commanding form of Reginald Brandon.

Perceiving with the intuitive sagacity of an Indian that the latter was the leader of his party, the partisan opened the parley by pointing his fore-finger at Reginald, and then pressing the closed fingers against his own breast ; he then pointed to himself with the same finger, and afterwards stretching both arms horizontally, moved them up and down with a vibrating motion, concluding his pantomime by again raising the fore-finger of his right hand vertically to the height of his forehead. Reginald, who could not understand these gestures, turned to Attō, saying, "Does my brother know what the stranger speaks, if so, let him explain ?"

"He says," replied the Delaware, "that he wishes to be friends with you, and he tells you by the last signs that he is an Upsaroka, and a chief."*

* It has before been mentioned, that among the roving tribes of the Great Missourian Wilderness every one has its distinctive national sign ; these are well-known to each other, and to white men who are experienced in the life of the Far-west ;

"Tell him," said Reginald, "that if his heart is true, and his tongue not forked, we also wish to be friends with him and his people."

The Crow replied by making the conventional sign for "Good," adding to it that for "Truth."

On this being explained to Reginald, the latter desired Baptiste to bring from the camp some tobacco, a pipe, and a few trinkets for distribution among the Crows. On the return of the Guide, the whole party took their seats, Reginald placing the partisan on his right, and the young prisoner whom he had released on his left. After the pipe had been smoked with due gravity and decorum, he divided among his guests some beads and other fanciful ornaments, according to their rank, with which they seemed highly delighted; the chief in particular testified his satisfaction by repeated gesticulations of friendship and affection towards his white-brother, whom he invited to go and feast with him and his braves; this invitation Reginald begged leave to decline, but he desired Attō to explain to his guest that he would visit him on some other occasion.

While these civilities were passing between the respective parties, a great commotion was observed

the sign mentioned in the text is that adopted by the Upsarokas, as they intend by the motion of their extended arms to imitate that of the wings of a crow in flight. The Sioux, Black-feet, Pawnees, Snakes, Aricaras, Comanches, &c., have all their distinctive national signs; but an enumeration of them would be tedious, and out of place here.

among the Crows stationed on the neighbouring hill, some of whom were seen galloping to and fro, as if communicating some unexpected intelligence. The partisan arose, and took his leave with courteous dignity, explaining by signs that he wished to ascertain what was passing among his people.

As he withdrew, the youth whose life Reginald had spared, turned his head and gave the latter a look which he understood to convey a warning, but it was so rapid that he could not feel assured that he had rightly construed its meaning. Reginald remained for some time on the spot watching the motions of the Crows, who had now gathered in their scattered horsemen, and were evidently awaiting with some impatience the return of their chief. Reginald's eye was still fixed upon them, when Attō, pointing to the eastward, whispered, "Men are coming!"

Turning his head in the direction indicated, Reginald thought he perceived a moving object in the distance.

"I see something in that quarter, but not distinctly; are you sure it is a party of men?"

"Sure."

"Mounted, or on foot?"

"Both," replied the Delaware, without removing his bright keen eye from the object; "they are upon our trail," he added, "if they are not friends, we had better return to the camp."

Meanwhile Reginald unslung his telescope, and

having at length brought it to bear upon the advancing party, he exclaimed,

“By heaven! there are white men as well as Indians there, horses, and loaded mules!”

“How many?” inquired Baptiste.

“They seem to me to be fifteen or twenty strong; should their intentions appear suspicious, we are near enough to retire into our camp; if they are friends, they will soon see us, and approach without fear or hesitation.”

The Guide shook his head as if distrusting all new comers in that remote region; but they were within rifle-shot of the covert, and could, if necessary, retire thither under the protection of the fire of those within it.

The Crows still hovered upon the summit of the adjoining hill, and several minutes of breathless interest elapsed ere the approaching band emerged from a hollow, upon a point of the valley where they were now clearly distinguishable, and proved to be, as Reginald had said, a mixed party of Indians and white men.

He was not aware that among the latter was a telescope as good, and a horseman whose eye was more practised in the use of it than his own; that horseman galloped out in front of his band and advanced at full speed to the spot where Reginald stood, and almost before the latter could rightly use his faculties of sight or speech, that horseman flung himself from his horse, and Reginald was in the arms of Ethelston.

There is nothing that stirs the heart to its very depths, more than the meeting a friend after a long separation ; not such a friend as is found in the ordinary intercourse of worldly society, but a friend whom we really esteem and love, a friend whom we have learnt to cherish in our bosom's core,—this must have been felt by all, (alas ! they are not very many) who have deserved and obtained such a blessing in life. How, then, must these stirrings of the heart be increased if such a friend comes to our aid and comfort when we thought him thousands of miles distant, when we are in anxiety and peril, when he brings us the latest tidings of our home ! We will not attempt to describe the meeting of the two long-separated and loving friends under such circumstances, nor to relate one hundredth part of the inquiries which each had to make and to reply to.

The reader is already in possession of the information which they had to communicate to each other, and can easily understand how Ethelston and his party, guided by the young Delaware, had followed the trail on which they had been preceded by the bands of Mahéga and of Reginald: the latter greeted with cordial pleasure Paul Müller, who now advanced to offer him his friendly salutation, while Pierre, Baptiste, and Bear-skin, who had weathered many a stormy day by flood and field together, interchanged the grasp of their horny hands with undisguised satisfaction.

In the meeting between the two bands of the Delawares, there was less demonstration, but it may be doubted whether there was less excitement, as the last comers narrated to their comrades the bloody vengeance which they had taken on some of their foes, and dilated upon that which they anticipated in pursuit of Mahéga.

Ethelston's party being provided with some coffee, sugar, biscuits, and other luxuries, which had been long strange to Reginald's camp, the evening of their arrival was devoted to a great merry-making, Monsieur Perrot undertaking the office of chief cook, and master of the ceremonies, both of which he executed with so much skill and good-humour as to win the favour of all present. In the midst of the feasting, the security of the encampment was never endangered by the omission of due precautions, for the horses were driven in and the sentries posted, as on the preceding night, Reginald being well aware of the treacherous character of his Crow neighbours, and his suspicions aroused by the slight, but significant look given to him at parting by the youth whose life he had spared.

While they were seated round a blazing fire enjoying the good cheer which Perrot had provided, Pierre, fixing his eyes upon the bear-claw collar worn by Attō, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and springing from his seat, went to examine it closer ; having done so, he pronounced

slowly and with emphasis a name as long as a Sanscrit patronymic.

"What does that mean, Pierre?" inquired Ethelston, who had found in the latter a guide of great shrewdness and experience.

"It is the name of the Upsarka to whom that collar belonged, in our tongue, "The man whose path is red." I saw it upon his neck last year, when I was at the post near the Upper Forks. He came to trade with us for a few knives and blankets—he was a great war-chief, and had killed more Black-feet than any man in his tribe."

"Well, Pierre, his own turn is come now; he will kill no more Black-feet nor white man either," said Baptiste to his comrade.

"Did yonder Lenape kill him, and in fair fight, man to man?"

"He was killed in fair fight, man to man; not by Attō, but by a young war-chief whom the Lenape call Netis," replied the Guide.

Pierre fixed his quick grey eye upon the athletic figure of Reginald Brandon, who coloured slightly as he encountered at the same time the glance of Paul Müller.

"It is true," he said, "I had foolishly separated myself from the rest of my party, I was intercepted in attempting to return, and only escaped paying the penalty of my carelessness by the speed of my horse. The Crow chief was better mounted than the rest of his tribe, and as soon as I paused

to breathe my horse, he attacked, and slightly wounded me ; in defending myself, I killed him."

"My son," observed the Missionary, "he died as he had lived, reckless and brave ; it rejoices me to hear you speak of the deed as one of necessity and self-preservation."

"I know not," muttered Pierre, "what he calls necessity, but it's a fine feather in the youth's cap ; and our Delawares shall know it too."

One of the most remarkable features in the character of this man, was the facility with which he acquired the habits and languages of the different tribes, among whom his roving life had thrown him ; moreover, he had the faculty of remembering with unerring certainty, any face, or spot, or tree or path that he had once seen, so that his services as guide and interpreter were highly valued ; and as Pierre, though a good-humoured fellow, was shrewd enough in matters of business, he usually exacted, and had no difficulty in obtaining a liberal remuneration from the rival leaders of the fur-trade companies ; he was tolerably well versed in the language of the Crows and the Black-feet, the two great nations inhabiting the vast region between the upper waters of the rivers Platte and Missouri ; and there were few of the roving tribes upon either bank of the latter, among whom he could not make himself understood. As an interpreter, he dealt fairly by his employer, although he hated the Black-feet, in consequence

of a warrior of that tribe having carried off an Indian *belle* to whom Pierre was paying his addresses. This offence he had never forgiven, and it gave him in all subsequent transactions a natural leaning towards the Crows, the mortal and hereditary foes of his successful rival's tribe.

While Pierre related, in an under tone, to those Delawares of his party who did not understand English, the victory obtained over the great war-chief of the Crows, by Reginald Brandon, the latter kept up a long and interesting conversation with Ethelston, whom he found already informed by the Missionary of his engagement to Prairie-bird.

On this subject Reginald, who knew the prudence of his friend's usual character, scarcely expected his sympathy or concurrence: he was therefore the more agreeably surprised, when he found him disposed to enter into all his plans for the recovery of his betrothed, with a zeal and enthusiasm almost equal to his own.

"The good Missionary," said Ethelston, "has told me much of the early life, as well as of the character and qualities of Prairie-bird. I cannot tell you how deeply she has engaged my interest, my own feelings towards your sister render me capable of appreciating yours, and I pledge you my faith, dear Reginald, that I will spare neither toil nor exertion, nor life itself, to aid you in this precious search."

Reginald grasped his hand,—there was no need of words of gratitude between them,—and ere long both turned to consult with Paul Müller, as to their further proceedings. After due deliberation, they agreed that on the following morning they should pursue the trail, regardless of their Crow neighbours, whom they had now little cause to fear, and that previous to starting they would hold a council, at which Reginald should propose the distribution of their respective posts, on the line of march, in the event of their wishing him to retain that of leader.

The night having passed without any alarm, Reginald summoned a general council of war before daybreak ; as soon as they were assembled, he told them through Baptiste, who acted as interpreter, that they were now strong enough to pursue the trail, without fear of interruption from the Crows, and that if the latter were foolish enough to make an attack, they would soon have cause to repent it. He then added that War-Eagle their chief being absent on the war-path, it was necessary for some one to act as leader until his return, and, as his party had been joined by so many warriors of experience, he would gladly place himself under the advice and guidance of the man whom they might select.

When Baptiste had finished this speech, the oldest warrior of Ethelston's party arose and said, " Is it not true that War-Eagle when he went, appointed

Netis leader in his place?" A murmur of assent came from the lips of Attō and his party. "Is it not true," continued the Indian, "that Netis is a brave and skilful warrior?—one who need not be silent when the braves strike the war-post? His heart is true to the Lenapé and he will tell them no lies."

"If the white men are content with Netis, the Lenapé wish no other leader. I have spoken."

As the scarred and weather-beaten warrior resumed his seat, another and a general murmur of approbation broke from the Delawares; and Ethelston having spoken a few words of similar import to the white men, Reginald found himself by universal acclamation chosen leader of the party.

After modestly thanking them for their good opinion, his first act was to appoint Attō as guide upon the trail, desiring him to select any two whom he might wish to assist him, in the event of its becoming forked, or otherwise difficult to follow; Monsieur Perrot, with the provisions, and loaded mules, occupied the centre of the line of march, in which comparatively secure post he was accompanied by Paul Müller, the main body of the hunters and the Delawares being distributed before and behind the baggage.

For himself Reginald reserved the rear-guard, where he retained Ethelston, Baptiste, and a young Delaware, whom he might despatch upon any emergency to communicate with the front. He

also appointed four of the best mounted of his men, two on each side of his party, to protect the flanks against any sudden attack, Pierre being sent forward to render any assistance to Attō that he might require.

These arrangements being complete, and made known to the respective parties, they were about to set forth on their journey when Attō informed Reginald, that the Crow youth was coming swiftly across the valley towards the encampment, pursued at a distance by several horsemen of his tribe ; the lad was riding one of the swiftest and most untamed of the wild horses with which that region abounds, yet he had neither bridle nor saddle, guiding the animal with a leather thong, which he had thrown round its nose, and urging it to its utmost speed with a bow which he held in his right hand. A few minutes brought the foaming little steed and its rider, to the edge of the thicket, where the latter, still holding the leather thong, stood in silence before Reginald ; his eyes were literally sparkling with indignant rage, and he did not even deign to look behind him to see whether his pursuers approached ; the latter, however, did not choose to venture near the encampment, but as soon as they saw that he had gained its shelter, they gave a few loud and discordant yells, and disappeared behind the hill.

The services of Pierre were now put into requisition ; and as soon as the youth found an ear

that could understand his tale, he told it with a rapidity and vehemence, that showed the strong excitement of his feelings; the story, as interpreted by Pierre, was briefly thus:—

“The youth was present on the preceding day at a war-council, where the Crows proposed a plan for inveigling the white men to a feast, and then attacking them unawares, at the same time desiring him to use the favour that he had found in their eyes, as an additional means for entrapping them; this he positively refused to do, and boldly told the assembled chiefs, that their counsels were wicked and treacherous, and that he would in no wise aid or abet them.” Indignant at this remonstrance from a stripling, the partisan had ordered him to be whipped severely with thongs, and to be tied hand and foot; the sentence was executed with the utmost cruelty, but he had contrived early in the morning to slip off his bands, and springing to his feet, he seized the fleetest horse belonging to the partisan, and leaping on its back, galloped off to warn his protector against the meditated treachery.

The truth of the tale required no confirmation, for the glow of resentment burnt too fiercely in his eye to be dissembled, and the light covering of antelope skin which he had thrown across his shoulders, was saturated with his blood. Reginald's first natural impulse was to punish the perpetrators of this outrage, but he checked it when

he remembered the magnitude of the stake that bound him to the trail, "Tell him, Pierre," said he, "that I thank him for his single tongue, and I love him for his honest brave heart. Ask him if there is anything that I can do for him."

"Nothing," replied the youth to this question; "tell him that I have warned him against the forked tongues of my tribe, because he gave me my life, and was good to me, but I must not forget that his hand is red with my father's blood. The day is very cloudy; the Great Spirit has given a hard task to the son of the fallen chief; his back is marked like the back of a slave; he has lived enough."

The voice of the youth faltered as he pronounced the last words; the thong 'ropped from his feeble grasp, and as he fell to the ground, the wild horse broke away and galloped across the valley. "He is dying," said Reginald, bending over him; "see, here below his hunting shirt is the broken shaft of an arrow, which one of his pursuers has shot with too true an aim." While he spoke the young Crow breathed his last.

CHAPTER XV.

SHEWING HOW WINGENUND FARED IN THE OSAGE CAMP, AND
THE ISSUE OF THE DILEMMA IN WHICH PRAIRIE-BIRD WAS
PLACED BY MAHEGA.

WE trust that the compassionate reader is now desirous to learn something more of the fate of Prairie-bird and her unfortunate brother Wingenund, whom we left a prisoner in the hands of the merciless chief of the Osages. For a long time after the latter left her tent, his parting threat rung in her ears, that she must on the morrow give her consent to be his bride, or by her refusal consign Wingenund to a cruel and lingering death. Her busy imagination portrayed in vivid colours the scene of torture, and the heroic fortitude with which she knew he would endure it, and as she turned from that picture, the figure of Reginald Brandon rose to her view, as if upbraiding her with the violation of her plighted troth; torn by these contending struggles, the poor girl sobbed convulsively, and the tears forced their way through the fingers with which she in vain endeavoured, either to suppress or conceal them. Lita threw her arms round her mistress's neck, and strove

by her affectionate, yet simple endearments to soothe her grief; for a long time they proved unsuccessful, but when at last she whispered,

“The Great Spirit is very good; he is stronger than Mahéga, let Prairie-bird speak with him as she often did when the Black Father was with her.”

“True, Lita,” she replied, looking gratefully at the Comanche girl through her tears; “you remind me of what I ought not to have forgotten.”

The next moment saw her prostrate upon her couch—the book of comfort in her hand, and her earnest prayers ascending toward Heaven.

She rose from her devotions with a calmed and strengthened spirit; the first result of which was a desire to converse with Wingenund, and to decide with him upon the morrow’s fearful alternative.

Mahéga willingly consented to the interview, justly believing that it would rather forward than retard his plan for compelling her consent, compared with which the boy’s life weighed not a feather in the balance, so he ordered him to be conveyed to her tent; and the guards who conducted him having informed her that if she unbound his hands, he would be instantly seized and removed, they retired to the aperture, awaiting the termination of the meeting with their habitual listless indifference.

Prairie-bird cared not whether they listened, as

she spoke to her young brother in English, of which she knew that they understood little or nothing.

"Dear Wingenund," she said, "you heard the threat uttered by that savage, after he struck you?"

"I did."

"Is there no device or means by which we can contrive your escape, we may trust the Comanche girl?"

"I do not see any," replied the boy calmly; "the eyes of the Osage chief are open, the hands of his warriors are many and ready. It does not matter; War-Eagle and Netis will be here soon; then all will go well."

"All well!" said Prairie-bird, shuddering. "Know you not, that to-morrow I must consent to be the wife of the Osage, or be the cause, and the witness of my brother's horrible death?"

Wingenund looked at her with unfeigned surprise.

"The daughter of Tamenund—the Prairie-bird sent by the Great Spirit, from an unknown land, to dwell among the lodges of the Lenapé—she who has learnt all the wise words of the Black Father—she to become the wife of that wandering wolf! Can my sister's heart beat towards him?"

"Heaven knows how I loathe and dread him! worse than the most poisonous snake in the prairie."

"I thought so," he replied. "And how ought a wife to feel towards the man whom she marries?"

"To feel that he is the joy, the food, the treasure of her heart; the object of her secret thoughts by day, of her dreams by night; that when she prays to Heaven, his name is on her lips; that she loves him as—as—"

"As Prairie-bird loves Netis," said Wingenund, smiling. The conscious girl blushed at the impassioned eagerness into which her feelings had betrayed her, but she did not attempt to deny her brother's conclusion, and he continued, more gravely: "Then my sister could not be the wife of the Osage, without leading a life of misery and falsehood. No, no," he added, his bright eye kindling as he spoke; "let to-morrow come; Wingenund is ready; he will show that wolf how the Lenapé die. Let to-morrow come, and Mahéga shall learn that Wingenund despises his hate as much as Prairie-bird scorns his love. My sister, I have spoken it. The deeds of my fathers are before my eyes; the blood of the ancient people is in my veins; words cannot change my mind. Farewell! and when you see War-Eagle and Netis, tell them that the Washashe fire drew neither complaint nor cry from the lips of Wingenund."

As he spoke, his agonized sister looked up in his face, and read but too plainly the high,

unconquerable determination legibly stamped upon its proud expressive features. She saw that the instinctive feelings of his race had triumphed over all the gentler impressions which she and the Missionary had endeavoured to implant, and knowing that now she might as well attempt to bend a stubborn oak as to effect any change in his resolution, she embraced him in silence, and suffered the Osage guards to lead him from the tent.

Composing herself by a strong effort of self-command, Prairie-bird revolved in her mind various schemes for saving the life of her devoted brother; one after another she considered and rejected, until at length the idea occurred to her that perhaps she might contrive to work upon the superstitious fears of Mahéga. With this view she examined carefully all her slender stock of instruments and curiosities,—the novelty of the burning-glass was past, the ticking of the watch given to her by Paul Müller, though it might surprise the Osage, could not be expected to alarm, or induce him to abandon his determination. Then she cast her despairing eyes upon the few volumes which formed her travelling library; among these her attention was accidentally directed to the almanack which the good Father had brought to her, from the settlements, when he gave her the watch, and she sighed when she thought how often she had amused herself in the spring, comparing them together, calculating the lapse of time, and the

changes of season which they severally announced. Her observation of the sabbaths had been most punctual, nor had it been interrupted by the toils and privations of the journey, so she had no difficulty in finding the week or the day then passing. "July," she exclaimed, reading to herself half aloud, "only two weeks of this sad month are yet past, methinks they seem more like fourteen months, than fourteen days! See here, too, on the opposite leaf prophecies regarding wind and weather. How often would the dear Father point these out to me, and strive to explain the wonderful terms in which they describe the movements of the stars; he was very patient, but they were too hard for me; I am sure he tried to make me understand these strange words, 'Aphelion,' 'Apogee,' 'Perigee,' but if he ever succeeded, I have forgotten it all. What is this notice in larger letters? to-morrow, to-morrow it stands written, 'Total eclipse of the sun, visible at Philadelphia 9h. 42m.'—surely, surely it will be visible here too. I will trust to it, I will build my faith upon it, and Wingenund's life shall yet be saved." So saying, she clasped her hands together, and her lovely countenance beamed with re-awakened hope.

Lita who had been watching her mistress with affectionate solicitude, and listening with childish wonder to her half-uttered soliloquy, was overcome with surprise at this sudden change in her demeanour; she thought that Prairie-bird had been con-

versing with some unseen being ; under which impression she approached, and asked, timidly,

“ Has Olitipa seen a Good Spirit, and have her ears drunk words of comfort ? ”

“ Olitipa has received words of comfort,” replied her mistress kindly ; “ they seem to her words from Heaven ; she trusts that she may not be deceived ; she will address her evening prayer to the Great Merciful Spirit above, and retire to rest, at least to such rest as it may be His will to give her.”

For many hours after Prairie-bird had been stretched upon her furry couch, did her thoughts dwell upon the solar eclipse, now the foundation of her hopes ; she remembered how the Missionary had explained to her that it was visible at one hour in one part of the earth, at a different hour in another part ; then she wondered whether at the spot where she now was it would be seen sooner or later than at Philadelphia,—this doubt her science could not resolve, and it held her long in anxious suspense ; but overwearied nature at length claimed her rights and she sank into an unrefreshing dreamy slumber in which the images of Wingenund, Mahéga, and Reginald Brandon were stalking confusedly over an eclipsed and darkened region of earth.

Early on the following morning, Mahéga who had resolved not to lose this favourable opportunity for working upon the fears of Prairie-bird,

caused a pile of dry branches of wood to be placed round a tree, which stood nearly opposite to her tent, to which he ordered Wingenund to be secured with thongs of bison-hide ; after which he and his warriors seated themselves in a semicircle before their victim, passing the pipe deliberately from mouth to mouth, as if to enjoy his suspense and terror.

If such was their object, it met with little success, for the young Delaware, in the brightest day of his youth and freedom, had never worn so proud and lofty an air as that which now sat enthroned upon his brow.

“ A thousand warriors of the Lenapé, whose blood is in my veins, have gone before me to the happy fields, — they knew not fear, and I the last of their children will bring no shame upon their race ; when I come they will say, ‘ Welcome, Wingenund ! ’ and before many winters and summers are passed, War-Eagle and Netis, Prairie-bird and the Black Father, will join me, and the blue eyes of the Lily of Mooshanne will be there also, and we will dwell in a land of streams and flowers, of numberless deer, and abundant corn, unvexed by cold, or want, or pain.”

Such was the vision that rose before the mental eye of the youth, and so completely was he engrossed by it, that he took not the slightest notice of the group, assembled to put him to a slow and agonizing death.

Meanwhile Prairie-bird having prayed earnestly to Heaven to support her, and pardon the deceit which she was about to practise, dressed herself with more than usual care, and coming forth from her tent, stood before Mahéga with a dignity of demeanour, to the effect of which even his fierce and intractable nature was not insensible. He rose not, however, at her approach, but contented himself with inquiring, "Has Olitipa come to save her brother's life, or to kill him?"

"Neither," replied the maiden firmly; "she is come to give good counsel to Mahéga; let him beware how he neglects it!"

"Let not Olitipa's speech travel in circles," said the angry chief. "Mahéga has said that this day she should consent to be his wife, or she must see that feeble boy burnt before her eyes,—there are but two paths,—which does Olitipa choose?"

"The feet of foolish men often wander where there is no path at all," replied Prairie-bird; and she added, with solemnity, pointing upward to Heaven: "There is only *one* path and one Guide, the Great Spirit who dwells above!"

Those of the Osages who were familiar with the Delaware tongue in which she was speaking, looked at each other, as if wondering at her words, but Mahéga, whose passion was only increased by her exceeding beauty, answered vehemently,

"It is easy for Olitipa to talk and to make

children believe that her words are those of the Great Spirit—Mahéga is not a child.”

“If he compare his strength with that of the Great Spirit,” said the maiden boldly, “Mahéga’s is less than the least finger of a child. Who can tell the power of the Great Spirit. The strong wind is his breath,—the thunder is his voice, the sun is his smile. If He is angry, and withdraws the sun, day is turned into night — darkness and fear dwell in the hearts of men.”

The energy of her language and manner were not altogether without their effect even upon the stern nature of Mahéga ; nevertheless, he replied,

“These are but the notes of singing-birds. Mahéga waits for the choice of Olitipa, — she becomes his wife, or the fire is kindled at the feet of Wingenund.”

Prairie-bird cast an anxious glance athwart the blue vault above ; not a cloud was in the sky, and the sun shone with the full brightness of an American July. She would not yet abandon hope, but, making a strong and successful effort to maintain her composure, she said in a firm, impressive tone, “Mahéga, let there be a bargain between us ; you seek Olitipa for a wife, if it be the will of the Great Spirit, she will submit, and her brother’s life will be spared ; but if the Great Spirit is displeased, and shows his anger by drawing a cloak over the face of that bright sun in the heavens,

Mahéga will obey His will, and let the brother of Olitipa go away unhurt.—Is Mahéga content that it shall be so ? ”

“ He is,” replied the chief, “ if the sign be such as he, and the Osage warriors may look upon with wonder ; not a mist, or dark cloud.”

“ It will be such as will make Mahéga *tremble*,” replied the maiden with dignity. “ Warriors of the Washashe, you have heard the treaty. Before the sun has reached yon western peak, the answer of the Great Spirit will be known.” Having thus spoken, she withdrew into the tent, leaving the Osages gazing upon each other with undisguised awe and amazement.

The maiden threw herself upon her couch in an agony of suspense, greater than can be described ! It was terrible to think, that her every hope of escaping from the dreadful alternative, was staked upon a sentence in an almanack, of the correctness of which she had not the slightest power to judge. Even the well-intentioned attempts at consolation made by her affectionate Lita, were of no avail ; her unhappy mistress entreated her to remain at the door of the tent, and report whatever might occur ; within and without a profound stillness reigned. The prisoner stood motionless by the sapling to which he was bound ; Mahéga smoked his pipe in the full confidence of anticipated triumph, surrounded by his warriors, who, less sceptical, or more superstitious than their chief,

looked and listened, expecting some confirmation of the last words of Prairie-bird.

Although the sun could not be opposite the rock which she had pointed out for nearly three hours, of which not a fourth part had yet elapsed, the anxious girl began to imagine that hope was at an end. Visions of future degradation and misery shot through her brain; she tore from her hot brow the fillet that confined her hair, which floated in glossy luxuriance over her shoulders. The reproaches of Reginald Brandon rung in her ears. The loathed embrace of Mahéga crept over her shuddering frame! At this crisis her eye fell upon the handle of the sharp knife concealed in her bosom; she drew it forth; the triumph of the powers of Evil seemed at hand, when a cry of surprise and terror from Lita recalled her wandering senses. She sprang to the door; visible darkness was spreading over the scene, and the terrified Osages were looking upward to the partially obscured disk of the sun, over the centre of which an opaque circular body was spread; a brilliant ring being left around its outer ridge.*

* It is unnecessary to inform the reader that neither the date nor the description of this solar eclipse is intended to challenge scientific criticism. Merely the general features are preserved of that kind of solar eclipse, which is termed "annular," and which takes place when the eclipse, though central, is not total, on account of the moon not being near enough to hide the whole of the sun, in which case part of the latter is seen as a bright ring round the part hidden by the moon.

Prairie-bird gazed upon the wondrous spectacle like one entranced ; the late fearful struggle in her breast had given a supernatural lustre to her eye ; her frame was still under high nervous excitement, and as, with long hair floating down her back, she pointed with one hand to the eclipsed sun, and with the other to Mahéga, well might the savage imagine that he saw before him a Prophetess whose will the Spirit of Fire must obey. Under the influence of awe and dread, which he strove in vain to conceal, he moved forward and said to her, "It is enough ! let Olitipa speak to the Great Spirit that the light may come again."

The sound of his voice recalled the mind of Prairie-bird to a consciousness of what had passed. She answered not, but with a gesture of assent motioned to him to withdraw, and supporting herself against one of the trees that grew in front of her tent, she knelt beside it, and veiling her face in the redundant tresses of her hair, found relief in a flood of tears. Overwhelmed by a sense of the merciful interposition by which she and her brother had been saved, and by a feeling of deep contrition for the sudden impulse of self-destruction to which, in a moment of mental agony she had yielded, she thought neither of the continuance nor the withdrawing of the dark phenomenon of external nature, but of the evil gloom which had for the time eclipsed the light of grace in

her heart, and the tears which bedewed her cheek were tears of mingled penitence and gratitude.

Still, Nature held on her appointed course ; after a few minutes the moon passed onward in her path, and the rays of the sun, no longer intercepted, again shed their brightness over earth and sky.

The Osages, attributing these effects to the communing of Prairie-bird with the Great Spirit, stood in silent awe as she arose to retire to her tent, and her secret humiliation became, in their eyes, her triumph.

Mahéga, finding that he had no pretext for refusing to release Wingenund, and that his warriors evidently expected him to fulfil his promise, ordered the youth to be unbound ; and in the height of his generosity, desired that some food might be offered to him, which Wingenund scornfully rejected.

The Osage chief having called aside two of those most devoted to him, spoke to them a few words apart ; and then addressing his liberated prisoner in the Delaware tongue, he said, "The Osage warriors will conduct Wingenund two hours on his journey ; he will then be free to go where he likes, but if he is again found skulking round the Osage camp, nothing shall save his life."

Wingenund knew that he was to be turned loose in a desolate region, unarmed and half-starved, but his proud spirit would not permit him

to ask the slightest boon of his enemy ; and without a word of reply, without even directing a look towards his sister's tent, he turned and followed his conductors.

For several miles they pursued the back-foot* of the trail by which they had come from the eastward, Wingenund being placed in the centre without weapon of any kind, and the two Osages marching one before, and the other behind him, being well armed with bow, knife, and tomahawk. The youth, unconscious that they had secret instructions from Mahéga to kill him as soon as they reached a convenient and sufficiently distant spot, made no attempt to escape, but walked quietly between them, considering within himself whether he should endeavour to rejoin his party, or persevere in hovering in the neighbourhood of the Osages ; if a suspicion of Mahéga's treachery did cross his mind, he allowed it not to influence his bearing, for he moved steadily forward, not even turning his head to watch the Osage behind him.

About five or six miles from Mahéga's camp,

* When a trail is made by a party on a march, the grass is of course trodden down in the same direction as that in which they are going. A party travelling along it from the opposite quarter, are said to take the back-foot of the trail. The author heard the expression used by an experienced Western hunter, but is not aware whether it is in common use ; at all events it explains its own meaning significantly enough.

the trail passed along the edge of a low wood, which skirted the banks of the same stream that flowed through the upper valley. This was the place where they proposed to kill their prisoner, and hide his body in the bushes, the chief having commanded that the murder should be kept secret from the rest of his party. They had just passed a thicket on the side of the trail, when the terrible battle-cry of War-Eagle rose behind them, and his tomahawk clove the skull of the Osage in the rear. Quick as thought, Wingenund sprang upon the one in front, and pinioned his arms; the Osage tried in vain to disengage them from the grasp of his light and active opponent. Brief was the struggle, for the deadly weapon of the Delaware chief descended again, and the second Osage lay a corpse upon the trail.

The brothers, having exchanged an affectionate but hasty greeting, took the spoils from their enemies according to Indian fashion, War-Eagle contenting himself with their scalps, and his brother taking such weapons and articles of dress as his present condition rendered necessary for his comfort and defence; after which, they threw the two bodies into the thicket, into which the Osages had intended to cast that of Wingenund, and continued their course at a rapid rate towards the eastward, War-Eagle relating as they went the events which had brought him so opportunely to the scene of action; they were briefly as follows:—

When he left his party, he never halted nor slackened his speed until he saw the smoke of the Osage camp-fire; concealing himself in the adjoining wood, he had witnessed all the surprising occurrences of the day; and in the event of the Osages actually proceeding to set fire to the faggots around Wingenund, he was prepared to rush upon them alone, and either rescue his brother or perish with him: but, with the true self-command and foresight of an Indian, he kept this desperate and almost hopeless attempt for the last chance; and when to his surprise and joy he saw the prisoner sent upon the trail with a guard of only two Osages, he took advantage of a bank of rising ground, behind which he crept, and moving swiftly forward under its shelter, gained unperceived the thicket, where he had so successfully waylaid them.

Fearing a pursuit, the brothers never abated their speed throughout the evening, or the early portion of the night. A few hours before dawn, some scattered bushes near the path offering them a precarious shelter, they lay down to snatch a short repose; a mouthful of dried bison-meat, which remained in War-Eagle's belt, he gave to his exhausted brother; and one blanket covering them both, they slept soundly and undisturbed until the sun was high in heaven.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAHEGA FINDS THE BODIES OF HIS TWO FOLLOWERS SLAIN BY
WAR-EAGLE.—SOME REFLECTIONS ON INDIAN CHARACTER.—
WAR-EAGLE RETURNS TO HIS FRIENDS, AND THE OSAGE CHIEF
PUSHES HIS WAY FURTHER INTO THE MOUNTAINS.

MAHEGA waited anxiously the return of the two men whom he had sent with Wingenund, being desirous to learn whether they had faithfully executed the treacherous commission with which he had entrusted them. When he found that the evening passed away, and that the successive hours of the night brought no intelligence of them, he became alarmed lest they should have fallen in with some hostile band of Indians, an occurrence which, in addition to the loss of two of his warriors, would threaten imminent danger to his whole party.

At the earliest peep of dawn he set out in search of them, accompanied by three of his followers, giving orders to the remainder to observe a strict watch during his absence. Traversing the little valley in front of his camp with hasty strides, he struck into the eastward trail, and followed it with unabated speed until he reached the spot where the deadly struggle of the preced-

ing evening had arisen. Here the indications were too evident to leave a moment's doubt upon his mind; the grass on and beside the trail was stained with blood, and from the neighbouring thicket were heard the snarls and yells of a pack of wolves quarrelling over their horrible banquet; while high in air several buzzards were wheeling round and round, as if endeavouring to find courage to descend and dispute the prey with the quadruped spoilers.

Dashing into the thicket, and driving the snarling wolves before him, Mahéga found his worst fears realized, and his horror-struck warriors stood in silence beside the mangled remains of their comrades. The conduct of Indians under such circumstances is uncertain and various as their mood, their impulse, their tribe, and their age. Sometimes they indulge in fearful threats of vengeance; sometimes, in the most woful howlings and lamentations; at others, they observe a silence as still as the death which they are contemplating.

The Osages, on this occasion, following the example of their leader, spoke not a word, although the sight before them (far too horrible for description) was sufficient to try the strongest nerves; it was chiefly by the immoveable firmness of his character, that Mahéga had gained and maintained the despotic influence which he exercised over his followers; neither did it fail him on this occasion, for he proceeded to examine the

mutilated remains of his deceased warriors with his usual coolness and sagacity, in order that he might discover by whom the deed had been perpetrated; on a close inspection of the skulls, he found that both had been fractured by a tomahawk blow, which had fallen in a direction almost vertical, but rather at a posterior angle of inclination, whence he immediately inferred that they had been killed by some enemy who had surprised and attacked them from behind, and not in an open fight; after a long and careful observation of the fractures he was of opinion that they were made by the same weapon. This inference, however, he kept to himself, and directing two of his followers to pay such offices to the dead, as were possible under the circumstances, and then to return to the camp, he went forward with the remaining Osage, to satisfy himself as to the manner in which the calamity had occurred; he remembered to have seen Wingendund starting on the trail, and although he knew him to be bold and active, he could not for an instant entertain the belief that a stripling, wearied with a sleepless night, stiff from being so many hours bound with thongs, and totally unprovided with arms, could have killed his two guards, who were strong, wary, and well-armed men!

For some distance Mahéga continued his course in moody silence, the beaten trail affording no indication sufficient to guide him in his conjecture,

but at length he reached a place where it crossed a small rivulet, the flat banks of which were sprinkled with a kind of gravelly sand; here he paused and examined every inch of the ground with the eye of a lynx, nor was it long before he detected the foot-prints which he sought, a smaller and a greater, the latter shewing longer intervals, and a deeper impression.

Rising from his stooping scrutiny, the eyes of the chief glared with fury, as he turned to his follower, and in a voice almost inarticulate with rage, groaned the hated name of War-Eagle.

"It is," he continued vehemently, "plain as the moon in the sky, the trail of the cursed Lenape and the light foot of his brother; see here, War-Eagle has walked through the water, and Wing-eund has sprung over it, the dew has fallen since they passed, they are far before us,—but Mahéga must not sleep till their scalps are in his belt. Is Toweno ready?" inquired the fierce chief, tightening his girdle while he loosened the tomahawk suspended from it.

"Toweno is ready," replied the Indian, "to fight or run by the side of Mahéga, from morning until night; his hand is not weak nor are his feet slow; but the Great Chief must not let the angry spirit bring a cloud before his eyes."

"Let Toweno speak," said Mahéga controlling his fierce impatience, "his words will find a path to open ears."

"War-Eagle," pursued the Osage, "is swift of foot and cunning as a twice-trapped wolf. He is not come upon this far war-path alone. Wingenund has been prowling round the camp, and while Mahéga follows the trail of War-Eagle, the youth may guide the pale-face warrior called Netis, with his band, to the encampment of the Washashe. Toweno has need of no more words"

Mahéga saw in a moment the truth and force of his follower's suggestion, and smothering for the moment his passion for revenge, he resolved to return at once to his encampment.

"The counsel of Toweno is good," said he ;
"when a friend speaks, Mahéga is not deaf."

Among the features that distinguish the character of the North American Indian, there is none more remarkable, none more worthy the study, and the imitation of civilized man, than the patience, and impartial candour with which they listen to the advice or opinion of others ; although so prone to be swayed by passion and governed by impulse, the Indian seems to have a wonderful power of laying aside these predispositions, when discussing a matter privately with a friend, or openly in council. The decorum with which all their public discussions are conducted, has been observed and recorded by every writer familiar with their habits, from the time of Charlevoix, and of the interesting "Lettres Edifiantes," to the present day. Colden,

Tanner, Mackenzie, and many others who have described the Northern tribes, concur in bearing their testimony to the truth of this observation; Heckewelder, Loskiel, Smith, Jefferson, confirm it in the central region; and the Spanish writers bear frequent witness to it in their descriptions of the Southern tribes, whom they met with in their campaigns in Florida, and the adjacent country. In reading the account given of the numerous tribes inhabiting the vast region between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, by Clarke, Lewis, Long, and others, the same observation forces itself upon us almost at every page, and it is the more remarkable when we reflect upon two facts, — first that we find this characteristic attributed to forty or fifty different nations inhabiting a continent larger than Europe, by the concurring testimony of travellers from different countries, and holding the most opposite opinions.

Secondly, we do not find a similar characteristic distinguishing other savages, or nomadic tribes in Asia, Africa, or the Pacific Islands.

There is not a public body in Europe, from the British Parliament down to the smallest burgh meeting, that might not study with advantage the proceedings of an Indian council, whether as described in the faithful pages of the German missionaries, or, as it may still be seen by any one who has leisure and inclination to visit those remote regions, where the Indian character is least changed

and contaminated by intercourse with the whites. Such an observer would find his attention attracted to two remarkable facts; first, that no speaker is ever interrupted: and secondly, that only those speak who from age, rank, and deeds, are entitled to be listened to.

It is a popular and plausible reply to say that discussions concerning the complicated business of a great country, cannot be carried on like the unimportant "talks" of these savage tribes; this reasoning is shallow and full of sophistry, for many of the Indian councils above referred to have involved all the dearest interests of the nation; their soil, their pride, their ancestral traditions, all were at stake, perhaps all with little more than a nominal alternative, to be bartered for the grasping white man's beads, whisky, and subsidies. In these councils, every listening Indian must have felt that his own home, the lodge built by his father, and the patch of maize cultivated by his family, were dependent on the issue of the negotiation, and yet it is not upon record that a chief, or elder-brave was ever interrupted in his speech, or that the decorum of the council was infringed by irregularity or tumult on the part of those who might have considered themselves injured and aggrieved.

Even in regard to time, it is a great mistake to suppose that anything is gained by interruption, for an obstinate talker will carry his point

in the end ; and although the persevering exclamations, and groanings, and crowings of an impatient House of Commons, may succeed in drowning his voice, and forcing him to sit down, he will rise again on some other occasion and inflict upon his hearers a speech whose bulk and bitterness are both increased by the suppressed fermentation which it has undergone.

Leaving the moody and dispirited Osage chief to find his way back to his encampment, we will now return to Reginald Brandon and his party, whom we left starting westward on the trail, marching in regular order, and prepared, without delaying their progress, to repel any hostile attempt on the part of the Crows. The latter band seemed, however, so impressed with the strength, discipline, and appointments of the white men's force, now that it had received a strong reinforcement, that they gave up all present intention of molesting it, and went off in an opposite direction in search of game, horses, or booty where these might be acquired with less risk and danger.

Reginald and Ethelston went together on the line of march ; and although the spirits of the former were damped by the recent and melancholy fate of the Crow youth, in whom he had felt much interest, the buoyant hilarity of his disposition did not long resist his friend's endeavours to banish that subject from his thoughts, and to turn

the conversation to topics more immediately connected with the object of their present expedition.

Reginald having once confided to Ethelston his love for Prairie-bird, found a pleasure in describing to him her beauty, her natural grace, her simplicity, in short, all those charms and attractions which had carried by storm the fortress of his heart; and it seemed that his friend was no less willing to listen than he to talk upon the subject; repeating question after question, regarding her with an unwearied intensity of curiosity that excited at length the surprise of Reginald himself.

"Indeed, Edward," he said, laughing, "did I not know that you are devoted to a certain lady on the banks of the Muskingum, and that your attachments are reasonably steady, I could almost believe that the fidelity and eloquence with which I have described Prairie-bird had made you fall in love with her yourself."

"Perhaps you are claiming more merit for your own eloquence than is due to it," said Ethelston, in a similar tone; "you forget that before I joined you, Paul Müller and I had travelled many hundred miles together; and it is a topic upon which he speaks as warmly and partially as yourself."

"Well he may!" replied Reginald with energy, "for she owes everything to his affectionate care and instruction, in return for which she loves and venerates him as if he were her father."

In such conversation did the friends while away many weary hours on the march ; and at the midday halt, and evening camp, they were joined by the worthy Missionary, who, justly proud of his pupil, and knowing that he was addressing those who would not soon be weary of hearing her praises, told them many anecdotes of her early youth, with an earnestness and feeling which often caused Reginald to avert his face, and Ethelston to shade his brow thoughtfully with his hand.

Nor was the march unenlivened by scenes of a merrier kind, for Pierre, Baptiste, and Monsieur Perrot kept up a constant round of fun and rail-lery around their camp-kettle ; the latter continuing to act as chief cook for all the white men and half-bred in the party, and leaving the Delawares to dress their food after their own fancy. Provisions were abundant in the camp, and Perrot continued by his ingenuity to give a variety both in appearance and flavor to supplies, which in truth consisted of little more than parched maize, biscuit, coffee, and bison meat. He talked incessantly, and his lively sallies not only amused his two companions, but often drew a smile from Reginald, in spite of the anxiety occasioned by the object of the expedition.

"Master Baptiste," said the valet cook, (as nearly as his language may be rendered into English,) "methinks those great hands of yours are better skilled in chopping Sioux skulls, or felling

bee-trees, than in the science of butchery: see, here, what unchristian lumps of meat you have brought me to dress!"

"Were it not for these great hands, as you call them," replied the sturdy Guide, "you, Master Perrot, with those fine skinned fingers, would often ere this have seen little of either deer or bison-meat for your supper!"

"As for that, I deny not that you are tolerably successful in hunting, and your load of venison is sometimes brought decently home; but in the cutting up of a bison, your education has been much neglected."

"It may be so, Monsieur Perrot," answered Baptiste; "I do not pretend to much skill in the matter, and yet methinks I should understand as much of it as one who had never seen a bison a month since; and who could not now dress a cow's udder half so well as an Osage squaw." Pierre laughed outright at his comrade's depreciation of Perrot's culinary skill, and the latter, whose temper was not a whit ruffled by this disparagement of his talents, inquired with the utmost gravity,

"Pray Baptiste, instruct me in this matter, for I doubt not, although you have so grievously mutilated the ox, that your method of dressing the cow's udder must be worth learning."

"Nay," replied Baptiste, "I will show you that when we come among cows and squaws;

meanwhile, I recommend you to make yourself a spare peruke, as we may soon be running foul of those Osages, or some other roving Indians, who may chance to carry off that moveable scalp on the top of your head."

This allusion to Parrot's disaster and narrow escape among the Sioux, turned the laugh against him, but he quickly checked its current by placing before his companions some buffalo steaks, and cakes of maize flour, which practically contradicted all that they had been saying in his disparagement of the good-humoured Frenchman's cookery.

Towards the close of the second days' march, one of the Delawares, who had been sent forward to reconnoitre, galloped to the rear and reported that he had seen one or two men at a great distance a-head, nearly in the line of the trail which they were now following. Reginald immediately sprung upon Nekimi, who was walking like a pet-dog at his side; and, accompanied by Ethelston, rode forward to examine the strangers with his telescope. The undulations of the intervening ground hid them for a considerable time from his view, and when they reappeared they were near enough to be clearly distinguished through his glass.

"War-Eagle," he exclaimed, "heaven be praised! it is my brave Indian brother returning with young Wingenund. Edward, I will

now present to you the noblest creature that ever yet I encountered in human shape. My feelings would prompt me to rush forward and embrace him; but we must conform ourselves to Indian usage here, or we shall lose the good opinion of our Delaware friends."

Reginald had confided to his friend all that had passed between himself and War-Eagle, not even omitting his unfortunate and long-cherished passion for Prairie-bird, so that Ethelston awaited his approach with no ordinary interest.

As the Delaware chieftain advanced with erect front, his expanded chest thrown slightly forward, and the fine symmetry of his form developed in every movement as he stepped lightly over the prairie, Ethelston felt that he had never seen, either in nature or in the works of art, a finer specimen of manhood; and when he witnessed the grave simplicity which mingled with his cordial greeting of Reginald Brandon, he could not deny that features, form, and bearing stamped the Delaware chieftain at once as one of the lords of the creation. Neither did the gentle gracefulness of the slighter figure by whom he was accompanied escape Ethelston's notice, and he felt no difficulty in recognizing in the interesting features of the youth, that Wingennund of whose high and amiable qualities he had heard so much from Reginald.

"These are, indeed," said Ethelston to him-

self, "worthy descendants of the Lenape princes, whose sway in bygone days extended over many hundred leagues of fertile territory, from the Ohio to the Atlantic coast: whose broad lands are now tilled by the Saxon plough, on the site of whose ancient villages now stand the churches and the populous streets of Baltimore, and the City of brotherly love. With the loss of their dominion, most of these once-powerful tribes have lost the highest and best characteristics of their race; subdued by the rifle, corrupted by the silver, degraded by the ardent spirits of the white man, they present but too often a spectacle in which it is difficult to recognize any traces of the attributes with which the narratives of our early travellers and missionaries invest them. But these are, indeed, features which a Titian would not have scorned to delineate; these are forms which the pencil of Michael Angelo and the chisel of Praxiteles would have rejoiced to immortalize."

While these thoughts were rapidly passing through the mind of Ethelston, the greeting between Reginald and War-Eagle was exchanged; and the former had given to his Indian brother a hasty sketch of the events which had occurred in his absence, and of those which had led to the reinforcement brought by Ethelston. A gleam of joy shot athwart the features of the Delaware, as he learnt the vengeance which his warriors had taken of their enemies; and his quick eye

glanced with gratified pride over the scalps which they displayed, and the magnificent bear-claw collar dependant from Attō's neck. The Lenape braves saw too that the tomahawk of their leader had not slept in its belt on his solitary war-path, for the scalps of the two unfortunate Osages whom he had slain hung close to its handle ; and though there was no shout of triumph, an audible murmur of satisfaction ran through the whole band.

When Reginald presented Ethelston to War-Eagle as his earliest and most faithful friend from childhood, the chief, taking him by the hand, said, "The friend of Netis is the friend of War-Eagle, — their hearts are one ; he is very welcome." Reginald then presented Wingenund to his friend, as the gallant youth who had saved his life on the banks of the Muskingum.

"I feel as if I had long known him," said Ethelston, shaking his hand cordially ; "I have come lately from Mooshanne, where his name is not forgotten."

"Is the Lily of Mooshanne well ?" inquired the youth, fixing his dark and earnest eyes full upon the countenance of the person whom he was addressing. Ethelston had been prepared by his friend's description of Wingenund for a demeanour and character highly interesting, but there was a melody, a pathos, a slight tremour in the tone in which he spoke those few words, there was also in his countenance a touching expression of

melancholy, that thrilled to the heart of Ethelston. How quick is the jealous eye of love! Ethelston knew that Wingenund had passed only one day in the society of Lucy, yet he saw in an instant the deep impression which that day had left on the young Indian's mind.

"The Lily of Mooshanne is well," he replied. "If she had known that I should visit her brother, and his Lenape friends, she would have bid me speak many kind words to them from her."

Wingenund passed on, and War-Eagle related to the two friends the leading circumstances of his own expedition, omitting all mention of the fatigue, the hunger, the sleepless nights that he had undergone, before he discovered and reached the Osage camp.

As he described the scene of Wingenund being tied to the post, with the dried faggots at his feet, and the appearance of Prairie-bird when Mahéga called upon her to pronounce her own or her brother's fate, both of his auditors held their breath with anxious suspense, which gave place to astonishment, as he proceeded to relate with undisguised awe, the mystery of the solar eclipse, which led to the liberation of Wingenund.

When he had concluded his narrative, Reginald was speechless, and Ethelston catching the Delaware's arm, inquired in a low whisper, "Has the Osage dared,—or will he dare to make Prairie-bird his wife by force?"

"He has not," replied the Chief, "the words of Olitipa, and the black sun, made him afraid." He added, drawing himself proudly to his full height, "Had the wolf threatened to touch her with his paw, the tomahawk of War-Eagle would have pierced his heart, or the bones of the Lenape chief and his brother would have been picked by the buzzards of the mountains." So saying, War-Eagle joined his expectant warriors.

In the meantime Mahéga returned to his camp, in a vexed and gloomy state of mind; as he passed the tent of Prairie-bird a darker frown lowered upon his brow, and having entered his lodge, he seated himself, without speaking to any of those who had assembled there, in expectation of his return.

The youngest of the Osages present having handed him a lighted pipe, retired to a corner of the lodge, where he resumed his occupation of sharpening the head of a barbed arrow, leaving the chief to his own meditations. These dwelt mainly upon Prairie-bird, and were of a nature so mingled and vague, as to cause him the greatest perplexity; the effect of her beauty and attractions upon his passions had rather increased than diminished. He loved her as much as one so fierce and selfish could love another; yet, on the other hand, he felt that he ought to hate her, as being the sister of War-Eagle, and the betrothed of the man who had struck and disgraced him; with

these contending feelings, there was blended a superstitious awe of her communion with the world of spirits, and a remote hope that some of these supernatural agencies might turn her heart in his favour, and induce her not only to become his bride, but zealously to employ all her mysterious powers in the furtherance of his ambitious schemes.

Such was the train of thought pursued by the Osage, as he leaned against the pile of furs that supported his back, and stretching his huge limbs at their ease, watched the eddy wreaths of fragrant smoke, which, gently puffed from his mouth and *nostril*, wound their slow way to the fissures in the lodge-roof by which they escaped.*

The suggestion of Toweno had made a strong impression upon Mahéga's mind, and led him to expect at no distant period, an attack on the part of the Delawares, and, as he was uncertain of the force which his enemy might bring against him, he resolved to make a timely retreat to some spot, where a pursuit, if attempted by the Delawares, might enable him to take them at a disadvantage.

* The herbs mingled by the Indians with a small proportion of tobacco, are frequently of a light and fragrant flavour ; sometimes too they have some narcotic properties. In order fully to enjoy their qualities after the Indian fashion, the smoker must inhale the smoke by the mouth and expel it through the nostril, in which operation the nerves and small vessels of the latter experience a pungent sensation which some consider highly agreeable, and is not unlike that which is caused by a pinch of mild, or perfumed snuff.

Calling to him an Osage who was leaning against one of the outer posts that supported the lodge, he desired him to make, with a comrade, a careful search of the neighbourhood, and to report any trail or suspicious appearance that they might find, and when he had given these orders he summoned Toweno, and started with him towards the head of the little valley, without informing him of the object which he had in view, but as the latter was the only person to whom the chief had entrusted the secret of the *câche*, where his most valuable spoils were deposited, and as they were now marching in that direction, he was not at a loss to divine Mahéga's intentions. After a brief silence, the chief said to his follower, "Do the thoughts of Toweno walk upon the same path with the thoughts of Mahéga?"

"They do," he replied.

"Can Toweno speak them?"

"Mahéga intends to leave the camp before the Lenapé come, and taking some goods with him as presents to the mountain tribes, to find a safe place where the enemy cannot follow him."

"Toweno says well," answered the chief, with a grim smile, "but that is not enough, the Lenape must be made a fool, he must be put upon a wrong trail."

"That is good, if it can be done," said Toweno gravely, "but it is not easy to put sand in the eyes of War-Eagle."

"Mahéga will put sand into his eyes, and a knife into his heart before this moon becomes a circle," replied the chief, clutching as he went the haft of his scalpknife, and unconsciously lengthening his stride under the excitement produced by the thoughts of a conflict with his hated foe. They had now reached the "câche," which was a large dry hole in the side of a rocky bank, the entrance to which was closed by a stone, and admirably concealed by a dense thicket of brambles and wild raspberry bushes; having rolled away the stone, Mahéga withdrew from the câche a plentiful supply of beads, vermilion, powder, and cloths of various colour, being part of the plunder taken from the camp of the unfortunate Delawares, and wrapping in two blankets as much as he and his companion could carry, they replaced the stone, carefully concealing their footprints as they retreated, by strewing them with leaves and grass. At a spot very near the câche was the skeleton of a deer, which Mahéga had killed on a former occasion, and purposely dragged thither. As soon as they reached this point, they took no further precaution to conceal their trail, because even if it were found, the party discovering it would stop under the impression that it was made by the hunters who had killed the deer. On returning to the camp they met the two Osages who had been despatched to reconnoitre, and who reported that they had found one fresh Indian trail in the woods

opposite the little valley, and that they had followed it as far as the stream, where, from its direction and appearance, they were assured it was the trail of War-Eagle; and Mahéga now first learnt that his daring foe had been within eighty yards of the spot selected for the torture of Wingenund. His was not a nature to give way to idle regrets; equally a stranger to fear and to remorse, the future troubled him but little, the past not at all, excepting when it afforded him food wherewith to cherish his revenge; so the information now received did not interrupt him in carrying into execution his plans for retreat. Accordingly, he desired Towneno to summon his warriors to a council, and in a short time the band, now reduced to eight besides himself, assembled in front of his lodge. Here he harangued them with his usual cunning sagacity, pointing out to them the risk of remaining in their present position, and setting before them in the most favourable light the advantages which might accrue from their falling in with some of the peaceable tribes among the mountains, and carrying back from them to the banks of the Osage and Kansas rivers a plentiful cargo of beaver and other valuable skins. Having concluded his harangue, he opened before them the largest (although the least precious) of the bales brought from the *câche*, which he divided equally amongst them, so that each warrior knowing what belonged to him, might use it as he thought fit; the remaining bale

he ordered to be carefully secured in wrappers of hide, and to be reserved for negotiations for the benefit of the whole band ; the Osages were loud in their approbation of the speech, and of the liberal distribution of presents by which it had been accompanied, and they retired from his lodge to make immediate preparations for departure.

While these were rapidly advancing, Mahéga, who had made himself thoroughly familiar with the neighbouring locality, considered and matured his plans for retreat, the chief object of which was to mislead the Delawares in the event of their attempting a pursuit. The result of his meditations he confined to his own breast, and his followers neither wished nor cared to know it, having full reliance upon his sagacity and judgment. Meanwhile, Prairie-bird remained quietly in her tent, grateful for the deliverance of her young brothers, and indulging in a thousand dreamy visions of her own escape, contrived and effected by Reginald and War-Eagle. These were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of Lita, who while engaged in carrying water from the brook, had gathered from one of the Osages some intelligence of what was going forward. If the truth must be told, this Indian, separated from the woman-kind of his own tribe, had begun to look on the expressive gipsy countenance of the Comanche girl with an eye of favour ; and she not being slow

to detect the influence which she had acquired, encouraged him just enough to render him communicative, and willing to offer her such attentions as were admissible in their relative situations. Yet in her heart she scorned him as a "dog of an Osage," and though he knew her to be only a slave, there was something in her manner that attracted him in spite of himself; it was not difficult for the quick girl to gather from her admirer the news of Wingenund's escape, and the death of the two Osages sent to guard him, but when she heard the latter attributed with an execration to the hand of War-Eagle, she was obliged to avert her face, that her informant might not observe the look of triumph that gleamed in her dark eyes.

Having ascertained at the same time, that Mahéga was about to strike his camp and resume his march, she rewarded the Osage by an arch smile, that sent him away contented, while she, taking up her water vessel, pursued her way to her mistress's tent.

To the latter, Lita lost no time in communicating what she had learnt, and was disappointed to observe that Prairie-bird seemed rather vexed than gratified by the intelligence.

"Does Olitipa not rejoice?" inquired she eagerly, "that the scalps of the Washashe dogs who kept Wingenund prisoner are hanging at the belt of the Lenape chief?"

"Olitipa is tired of blood," answered the maiden, mournfully, "and the loss of his warriors will make Mahéga more fierce and cruel to us. See, already he prepares to go on a distant path, where the eyes of War-Eagle and Netis may not find us;" and the poor girl shuddered at the prospect of a journey to regions yet more wild and remote, and a captivity yet more hopeless of deliverance.

"Let him go where never Washashe foot stepped before," replied Lita, "where no trail is seen but that of the bighorn, and the black-tailed deer; War-Eagle will follow and will find him."

Prairie-bird smiled sadly at the eagerness of her companion, and then desired her aid in getting their wardrobe, and few moveables ready for the expected journey. While they were thus employed Mahéga called Prairie-bird to the door of her tent, where she found the chief, with his arm wrapped round with a cloth; and believing him to be wounded, she acceded at once to his request that she would give him one of her kerchiefs for a bandage. During the remainder of the evening she saw nothing more of him or of his people, and she slept undisturbed until an hour before dawn, when she was awakened by the bustle of preparation for departure.

As soon as her light tent was struck and fastened to the poles which supported it, she observed that a kind of cradle had been constructed by the Osages, which was covered with skins, and was

adapted to the purpose of carrying herself or her moveables, when slung to the tent poles, as well as to convey its contents dry over any river that might obstruct their passage.

The Osage party was now divided into two, of which one was reserved by Mahéga for his own guidance, the other being entrusted to that of Toweno; all the horses were placed under the charge of the latter, including those carrying the packages, and the palfrey usually ridden by Prairie-bird; this party bent their course to the northward, and Mahéga accompanied them a few hundred yards, repeating many instructions to Toweno which seemed from his earnest gesticulation to be both minute and important.

The heart of Prairie-bird sank within her, when she saw her favourite horse led away, and herself left with Lita on foot, attended by Mahéga and four of his men; knowing, however, the inutility of any present attempt either at resistance or flight, she awaited in uncomplaining silence the further commands of her captor, although she easily saw through the mocking veil of courtesy with which he disguised his anticipated triumph over her baffled friends. To his inquiry whether she preferred travelling on foot to being carried in the wicker-frame by two of his men, she replied without hesitation, in the affirmative; upon which he presented her with a pair of moccasins, to be worn over her own, so ingeniously contrived

that although they did not encumber her movements by their weight, they yet rendered it impossible that her foot-print should be recognised, even by the practised eye of War-Eagle. A similar pair was also placed on the feet of Lita.

It may easily be imagined, that the Osages during their residence at this encampment, made various excursions for hunting and other purposes ; they had used on these occasions old trails made by native tribes or by the bison ; one of these ran in a north-east direction, skirting the base of the high western hills, and offering the prospect of easy travelling, through an undulating and partially wooded country. Into this path Mahéga struck at once, leading the way himself, followed by Prairie-bird and Lita, the four Osages bringing up the rear. This line of march being adopted by the cunning chief, first, that he might have frequent opportunity of watching and speaking with the maiden, and secondly, that his men might be the better enabled to fulfil his strict injunction, that they should carefully remove any trace which she might purposely, or accidentally, leave on the trail.

Such an idea did not, however, appear to have entered the thoughts of Prairie-bird, for she followed the Osage chief with a blithe and cheerful air, replying good-humouredly to the observations, which he from time to time addressed to her, and pointing out to Lita the beauties of the scenery through which they were passing.

It was indeed a lovely region, abounding in rock, herbage, and magnificent timber ; the latter affording an agreeable shelter from the rays of the sun, while the fresh breeze, blowing from the snow-capped mountains, which bounded the western prospect, rendered the exercise of walking pleasant in the highest degree.

They had followed the trail for some time without meeting with any game, when the quick eye of Mahéga detected a mountain-deer, browsing at no great distance, and in a moment an arrow from his bow pierced its flank ; the wounded animal bounded onward into the glade, and the chief sprang forward in pursuit. The Osages fixed their keen and eager eyes on the chase, muttering half-aloud expressions of impatient discontent at being prevented from joining it. Swift as had been the arrow of Mahéga, it was not more so than the thought and hand of Prairie-bird, who contrived while her guards were gazing intently on the deer and its pursuer, to let fall unperceived a small slip of paper upon the trail ; so completely did she appear absorbed in watching the chase, that the movement was unnoticed even by Lita, and the party continued their way a few hundred steps, when a signal from Mahéga, now out of sight, soon brought one of his followers to assist him in cutting up the quarry.

Before leaving her tent, Prairie-bird had prepared and secreted about her person several

small slips of paper, on each of which she had written the word, "Follow," trusting to her own ingenuity to find an opportunity of dropping one now and then unobserved by the Osages.

Such an opportunity having now occurred, it had been successfully employed, and the maiden went forward with a lighter heart, in the confident hope that Providence would cause some friendly eye to rest upon the slight, yet guiding token left upon her path.

For two days Manéga pursued his march leisurely, as if fearless of pursuit, halting frequently to afford rest and refreshment to Prairie-bird, and camping at night, on some sheltered spot, where his men constructed for her protection a hut, or bower of branches, over which was thrown a covering of skins; before setting out in the morning this bower was destroyed, and the branches dragged to some distance in several directions, and Mahéga having carefully examined the spot, was the last to leave it, in order to ensure that no indication or trace of his fair prisoner might remain.

On the third day about noon they reached the banks of a broad stream, which two of the Osages crossed immediately, with instructions from their chief to make a visible trail in a N.E. direction for some distance, when they were to enter the river again at another place, and to wade or swim down it until they rejoined him; meanwhile Prairie-bird and Lita, with such articles as they wished to keep

dry, were placed in the light coriole or wicker-boat covered with skins, and Mahéga guided its course down the stream, followed by the remainder of his men; they descended the bed of the river for several miles in this way, and although more than one trail appeared on the banks as a crossing place for Indians or bison, he passed them all unheeded, until he came to a broad track, which had very lately been trodden by so many feet that the trail of his own party could not be distinguished upon it; here he halted until he was re-joined by the men whom he had left behind, when they proceeded forward at a brisk pace, towards the spot which he had appointed as the rendezvous for his party in charge of the packages and the horses.

Mahéga was now in high spirits, being confident that the precautions which he had taken would throw the pursuers off the scent, and enable him to follow out his plans, which were to trade during the summer, with the Shosonies and other tribes hovering about the spurs of the mountains, procuring from them beaver and other valuable furs in exchange for the fine cloths and goods which he had brought from the Delaware camp; after which he proposed to return to the northern portion of the Osage country, enriched by his traffic, and glorying in the possession of his mysterious and beautiful bride.

Such were the projects entertained by the Osage

chief, and he brooded over them so abstractedly, that he afforded to the ever watchful Prairie-bird an opportunity of dropping another of her small slips of paper unperceived ; she did not neglect it, although almost hopeless of her friends ever discovering her path after the many precautions taken by Mahéga, and the long distance down the course of the river where no trail nor trace of the passage of his party could be left.

On reaching the rendezvous he found his detachment with the horses and baggage already arrived ; they had come by a circuitous route, availing themselves of several Indian trails by the way, on one of which Toweno had, by direction of his chief, scattered some shreds of the kerchief that he obtained from Prairie-bird ; after which he had returned upon the same trail, and diverged into a transverse one, which had enabled him to reach the rendezvous by the time appointed.

Prairie-bird being again mounted upon her favourite palfrey, the whole party set forward with increased speed, which they did not relax until towards evening, when they saw in the distance numerous fires, betokening the neighbourhood of a populous Indian village. Mahéga then ordered a halt, and having sent forward Toweno to reconnoitre, encamped in a sheltered valley for the night. When Prairie-bird found herself once more, after the fatigues of the two preceding days, under the cover of her own tent, she looked round its small

circular limits, and felt as if she were at home! casting herself upon her couch of furs, she offered up her grateful thanks to the Almighty Being who had hitherto so mercifully protected her, and soon forgot her cares and weariness in sound and refreshing slumbers.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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